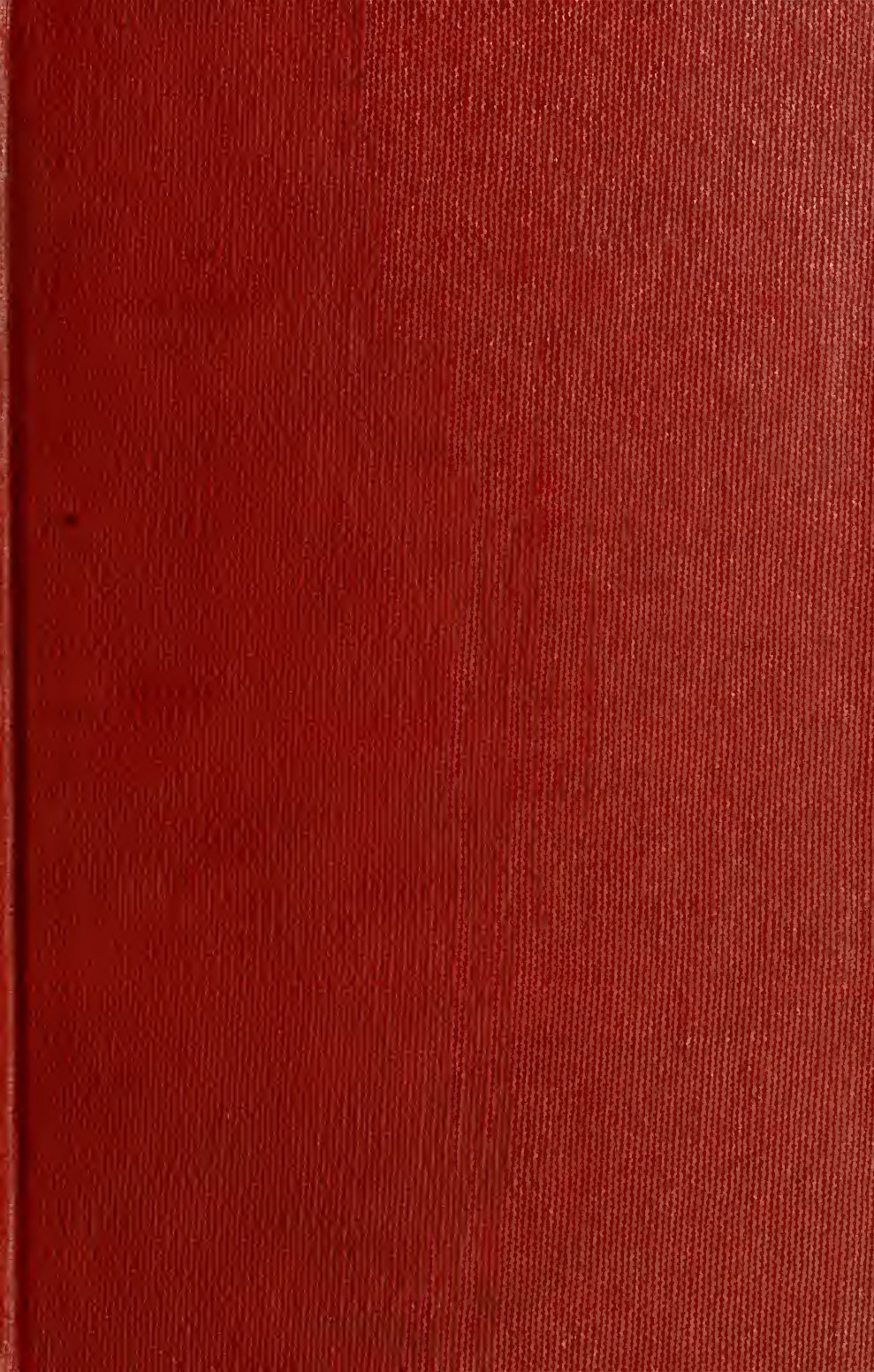








COLONEL THOMAS KNOWLTON

From Trumbull's painting of the
Battle of Bunker Hill.

THE
BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS

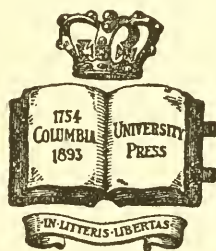
SEPTEMBER 16, 1776

WITH A REVIEW OF THE EVENTS OF
THE CAMPAIGN

BY

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New York

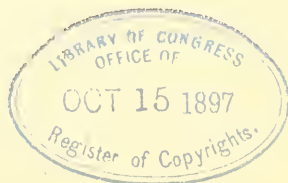
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PREFACE

WHAT we have come to know as the "Battle of Harlem Heights" was one of those minor successes in our Revolutionary War which counted for much in stimulating the drooping spirits of the American soldier or in effectually disturbing the plans of the enemy.

That Washington should speak of it as having cheered his men "prodigiously" during an otherwise depressing campaign would alone excite our interest in its details. If it cannot be quite classed with such happy strokes as Bennington or Oriskany, or with Stony Point or Cowpens or King's Mountain, it had at least a special place and significance of its own. We seem bound to appreciate it as highly as the records show it to have been appreciated by the men of the time. It was a stirring open-field affair, coming as a surprise and a check upon the enemy's pride, and calling out that recuperative power and manly courage of the as yet untrained Continental, which, with added experience, will stand him in good stead all through the Revolution. Not since Lexington and Concord, seventeen months before, had he enjoyed a chase of the regulars. At Harlem Heights it was to be on a smaller scale and less disastrous to the invader,

but on the other hand with more form as an action, and on more even terms as it progressed for a mile up and down hill and over fields and fences and through lanes and orchards. Here, also, there were to be brave and costly sacrifices. Without the association of the names of Knowlton and of Leitch the battle would lose something of its meaning.

It is not a little singular that no adequate account of this engagement appeared until a comparatively recent date; and only within a few years has its site been fixed with any degree of precision. On the occurrence of its centennial anniversary, September 16, 1876, the Historical Society of New York celebrated the event with appropriate ceremonies on Morningside Heights, on what was then supposed to be the battle-field, to the east of the new grounds of Columbia University, thus recognizing the local prominence it merited. The late Hon. John Jay delivered the address of the day, which was subsequently published with an appendix containing all the letters and documents obtainable throwing any light upon the battle. Some descriptions of the "affair," as an occasional Revolutionary writer speaks of it, had previously appeared, to which reference will be made in another connection; but the Jay publication supplanted all, as the foundation or starting point for any further investigation. The documents in the case, it should be said, were collected by the former and present librarians of the Historical Society, Mr. Stevens and Mr. Kelby, to

whose interest and efforts in restoring the action to its proper place in our history we must cordially acknowledge our obligations.

In adding still another version to the literature of this battle the present writer has a threefold object. *First*, to bring together all the authorities in convenient form for local reference, including most of the documents in the Jay publication as well as additional material since gathered by Mr. Kelby and published in the "Magazine of American History," and some new papers which the writer himself has been able to secure. *Second*, and more important, to call attention to the fact that upon a re-reading of all the authorities and a close examination of the topography and landmarks of the field as reproduced from contemporary surveys, we must fight the battle on the *west* and not, as heretofore, on the east side of Morningside Heights. And *third*, to introduce the new details into the account and enlarge the picture. The more we know of the day's work the better we understand why the participants were greatly inspired by it.

The representation of Knowlton in the frontispiece has been reproduced from Trumbull's painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill in the Wadsworth Athenæum at Hartford, Connecticut. While not authenticated as a portrait, it has its interest and charm as the painter's ideal of one of the heroes of the rail fence in that action, and in turn we may accept it as our own ideal of the gallant leader who lost his life at

Harlem Heights. The maps are facsimiles of original draughts or prints, or compilations prepared with care from authentic sources. All are new and are presented here for the first time. In the "Plan" of the battle-field, the heights, the farm lines, the location of the only three houses on the site, the lanes, the orchard, the Hollow Way, the "Fly," and the woods, referred to in the early accounts, have been located from deeds, surveys, and other official documents identifying each point.

As associated with the local history of this city, we may be pardoned for making the most of the battle that the facts will permit. It was our one Revolutionary success,—and not a slight one if it came at the right moment to restore confidence to our army, if it encouraged Washington when his anxiety was the greatest, if it made the enemy a little more wary and again delayed his advance, and if, as we follow many of the same men engaged, to the banks of the Delaware, we see it foreshadowing the possibility of Trenton and Princeton with which the gloomy year closed so brightly. The site of the battle-field, too, it is gratifying to know, is well defined, beyond all possibility of doubt. We must believe the eyewitnesses and participants of 1776 who tell us that the action took place on the banks of the Hudson River between old Nicholas Jones' house and the Hollow Way. Farmers Hoaglandt and Vandewater, over whose fields the exciting encounter had its run, would confirm them. Those fields have been

converted to-day into one of the most attractive sections of the city. If any lover of American history, if any school-boy, if "Mr. Felix Oldboy," wishes to follow our Harlem Battle from point to point, let him go to Morningside Heights and walk along the Boulevard and the Riverside Drive and Claremont Avenue, or stand on the grounds of Columbia University and Barnard College, or look down the eastern slope of the hill on which the mausoleum of the great Union Soldier stands, and there he will find himself in some sort of touch with the men to whose good performance on September 16, 1776, the pages of this little work are devoted.

NEW YORK CITY, July 1, 1897.

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I

OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN — BATTLE OF LONG ISLAND — RETREAT TO NEW YORK

THE campaign of 1776 around New York presents a more interesting study, and offers more “nuts for the historian to crack,” than any other of the War of the Revolution. Some criticism, in fact, goes the length of asking, Why any campaign at all in this vicinity?

One unexpected development of it was that the personal reputation most seriously damaged proved to be that of the victorious British general and not of the defeated and all but ruined Washington. Howe was to undergo Parliamentary “investigation,” while Washington came no nearer that experience than to be tried in the jealous imaginings of the later Conway Cabal. In their accounts of this year’s events both English and American writers dwell upon the missing of a great opportunity on Howe’s part to crush his opponent outright and end the rebellion; and under the shelter of this judgment the generalship of the American commander escapes review. Neither set of writers shows a disposition to push Washington to the wall when Howe did not, while the opinions of both, at least in part, are perhaps best reflected by Professor Gold-

win Smith in his recent study of our history, where he says: "The King had no general. Wolfe and Clive were gone. Moore was a boy, Wellington a child, and India claimed Eyre Coote. Cornwallis was energetic and enterprising; he reaped laurels afterwards in India. Had he or Sir Guy Carleton commanded in chief there might have been a different tale to tell. Howe, who did command in chief, though brave, was torpid; probably he was not only torpid but half-hearted. . . . Had he followed up his victory [on Long Island] there probably would have been an end of the Continental army, whatever local resistance might have survived. But Howe, there can be little doubt, was wavering as well as lethargic, and instead of pressing his enemy he went to luncheon. . . . His subsequent conduct seems to have been marked with a sluggishness and irresolution which the energy of his lieutenant, Cornwallis, could not redeem. Washington was allowed to pluck victory and reputation out of the jaws of defeat." ¹

Whether this unceremonious handling of the British commander-in-chief has been altogether just or not, depends upon the historian's estimate of Washington's management of his own side of the campaign. In a way it is a question of fact. If Howe missed an opportunity, how came Washington to offer it to him? Was the opportunity all that has

¹ "The United States—An Outline of Political History, 1492–1871." By Goldwin Smith, D.C.L. pp. 85, 94.

been claimed for it? One can detect a tendency in the modern criticism of our Revolutionary events to examine these points more in the scientific than the traditional spirit, and make the interest of this campaign turn as much upon the merits and defects of Washington's generalship as upon the shortcomings of Howe. Assuming that the leader of the American cause, whose personal activity and vigilance were never more constant than in this year of disasters, committed certain errors in his efforts to defend New York, we have a field for discussion here as to their pivotal character, the ways in which they might have been avoided, and the sufficiency of the enemy's reasons for failing to take advantage of them. These points bear upon the place we are to give the Battle of Harlem Heights in the campaign.

The larger question, whether the attempt to hold New York at all against an enemy who, sooner or later, could control the waters surrounding it, was wise policy, involves so much more than the decision of any one man, even the commander-in-chief, that criticism affecting him individually needs always to be qualified. Barring a few objectors, there was but one opinion in the matter at the time. Not to make a vigorous effort, be the difficulties great or small, to retain the principal commercial port in the colonies, whose possession would be of immense advantage to the British, never occurred to the Americans. There were sound reasons for this. The defence of the soil, the protection of a population, and the control of the

Hudson at its mouth as long as possible to secure interior lines, were necessarily self-imposed. From the political or revolutionary standpoint, the interests of soil and population constituted the "cause." To abandon either to any great extent was to weaken it. New York was the centre of a population numbering more than forty thousand souls, if we include that of Long Island, Westchester County, and the New Jersey environs, which would be controlled by the power controlling the city. To surrender this at the outset of the struggle as a free gift to the enemy, would have been as impolitic in itself as it would have been impolitic in its effect upon other seaboard populations, which inevitably would have taken the alarm. It was of no consequence what the sympathies of the population might be. If it was wholly Tory or Loyalist, it could legitimately be made to feel the pressure of the war; if a certain proportion, more or less, was ardently Revolutionary or Whig, its defence was a matter of duty and honor. The liability of imperilling the whole in protecting a part could be considered when the critical moment came.

The relation of the population of New York to the war—its political sympathies at the outbreak, as well as its distribution during the contest—is full of interest, and remains yet to be carefully studied. Whatever elements went to make it up,—call it cosmopolitan, if we please,—it is certain that no place in the colonies in its combined aspects was more distinctively English. In no place, for example,

would a typical Londoner have found himself more at home ; for while hinting at its provincialism as a matter of course, he would have noted its general English air, and felt its sympathetic English pulse. In its forms of government as the capital of the province, and a chartered city, its relationship was unmistakable. The governor, in his mansion within the fort at the Battery, kept up his suite and state as the king's representative governing by "instructions." He had his council of twelve, his coach and four, and was the centre of a sort of court society. However objectionable personally he might prove to be at times, he was the sovereign's appointee, and was bound to receive much formal respect. Whenever the Provincial Assembly was elected in response to his "summons" and convened in the city hall in Wall Street, the Speaker was chosen and approved with all the ceremonies observed in the House of Commons. The Assembly addressed the governor, and the governor addressed the Assembly, which, thereupon, proceeded to business. This was all familiar and regular, in fact quite ancient and "customary." That Assembly, more often than not, would continue English precedent by immediately developing a stout "opposition" faction or majority, as the case might be, and then, upon voting a niggardly civil budget wherein the governor's salary was concerned, be promptly adjourned, prorogued, or dissolved.

The city government, as an example of an antiquated form, was also thoroughly English. It was a

Stuart product. The charter granted to us in 1730 during Governor Montgomerie's term, as a modification of an earlier instrument, was modelled upon the close corporation charters which had been imposed by Kings Charles and James Second upon so many English municipalities. Its leading provisions were restrictive. The mayor was not to be elected by the citizens, but appointed by the governor, and citizenship with the right to vote was limited to property holders and such others of any class upon whom the common council might confer the "freedom of the city." The mayor's court, the recorder's desk, and the aldermen with their ordinances, licenses, fees, and fines, were the same set pieces of local government machinery that might have been found, with some few exceptions, in any mossy borough of old England. As at home, the written ballot was unknown in public elections and men voted in the good old manly fashion with "the open voyce." Everything worked well enough around our Colonial city hall, and no one complained. Inherited English forms were not to be changed. Among the exceptions, London was somewhat freer, its privileges a trifle more popular; but New York never called for charter revision even in Stamp Act and "Independence" times, nor indeed until many years after the Revolution.

Socially, the dividing lines were marked as strongly as in the mother country. The landed gentry were English gentlemen, no matter whether of Dutch or Huguenot descent, and they were numerous and

influential. One has only to glance at the well-known and accurate Ratzer plan of Manhattan Island as far north as Fiftieth Street, published in 1766, to see how all the choice sites were taken up by the wealthy and established families. For country seats the refreshing water front was sought first of all, and the most "elegant" among them — so described by English travellers of the time — were to be found on the banks and slopes of the North and East rivers, which to-day are devoted to factories, tenements, and dockyards. Except along the main highway — the Bowery and Kingsbridge road — few mansions were erected in the centre of the island. The rough site of Central Park was then untouched and was much of it borne on the surveys as the "Common Lands" of the city. Taken as a body this New York aristocracy was the richest in America and through its commercial and official relations kept more in touch with the prevalent notions and fashions of the corresponding social grade at home. This was true of all, even of the better Dutch element, which by lapse of time and intermarriage was practically losing its identity. By the time of the Revolution the New Yorkers knew themselves only as Englishmen. The nationality of the city was fixed. Every change and movement, even of minor importance, indicated the drift. Dutch street names began to disappear and English preference and ascendancy were shown in such new names as Crown, King, Queen, Prince, Princess, Duke, Whitehall, Ann, George, Eliza-

beth, Greenwich, William, Exchange, and others. The two public gardens of the city, "Vauxhall" and "Ranelagh," were named after similar resorts in London. And, finally, there was the English church, Trinity and its parishes, which visibly emphasized the union of the mother church and state in the minds of a large proportion of the residents.

That a city so constituted and educated, with so much in its traditions, forms, customs, natural inclinations, and prospects to draw it closely to home associations, should bodily join in a Revolutionary movement upon comparatively short notice, was not to be expected. Every thinking man in the colonies realized that, however unwelcome New York's attitude might have been to him.

It was in just such a city, nevertheless, that we would look for a powerful Revolutionary party, in the minority at first, but aggressive. It was a party which proposed to keep the city at all events from pronouncing for the king. During 1775 there was no disposition to force matters; a division of sentiment existed among the Whigs, both in and out of Congress, as to the proper handling of this important centre. It was to be treated delicately in the hope that, among other influences, successes in the field elsewhere and a more general "uprising" everywhere would improve the situation. These influences told. That is, while the Whigs in the city were increasingly confident and assertive, the military outlook in the spring of 1776 was such as to turn many doubters

to their ranks and authorize them to act with new spirit and vigor.

How many in that population of twenty-six thousand were then avowed Whigs can only be estimated. Probably more than half. The parties divided along well-recognized lines. Two-thirds of the gentry, the landed proprietors, were loyalists; also the official class, employees and hangers-on of the Provincial and city governments. The majority of churchmen, Quakers, conservative elements in the Dutch, Moravian, and other congregations, many importing merchants, traders, and subordinates depending on these, and hundreds in all classes, stood by the old order of things. The city's Whig element dated back to earlier political issues in the province, when "politics" had a social side. Family influence was concerned. Parties were led by such universally known proprietors as the Livingstons and De Lanceys. In the Revolution they divided on the new issue and became Whigs and Tories in the same sense in which those parties were known at home. Old rivalries thus added to the bitterness of feeling in New York. The Tories called themselves "property" men and "friends of the government"; they berated the Whigs with being nothing less nor anything better than "the populace" led by demagogues. The Whigs, however, were most respectably led. There were property men among them also,—the Livingstons, Morrisises, and others,—whose influence went the further as it was thrown on the Colonial side,

while the array of representative merchants, gentlemen, traders, and solid middle-class men gave character to the movement. The lists of local committees here from 1774 to 1776 mark the sterling quality of the patriotic party.

Early in 1776 it became necessary to decide what should be done with or at New York as a point for military operations. The enemy were about to evacuate Boston, and that they would next aim for this city was evident.¹ Congress, the town committees, and Washington and his officers, determined to forestall them. In response to the sentiment alluded to not to yield a foot of soil, a house, or an inhabitant without an effort to protect and hold them, preparations were made to fortify the place. The previous considerate policy gave way to decisive measures. "We will keep New York as long as we can. The enemy must fight for it," was the keynote, the patriotic instinct, of the hour. In spite of all the disasters that followed the attempt to defend the city, we must still hold with the men of the time that that was the instinct to obey. Moreover, that was the very moment to encourage and magnify every evidence and indication of the steady growth of the Revolutionary sentiment. The issue had yet

¹ To Washington, Colonel Joseph Reed, afterwards his adjutant-general, wrote from Philadelphia, March 15, 1776: "If Howe should leave Boston, we expect he will make for New York; and, at all events, we look upon that as one of the scenes of the summer business."

to be presented in clear-cut lines. The time was approaching when the merely negative-defensive would have to be discarded, and some strong and magnetic call sounded that would impress the meaning of the struggle more deeply upon the colonists, and draw them closer together. A "Declaration of Independence" must be proclaimed. Abandonment of New York at that juncture, on the ground of difficulties and hazards, would, under the circumstances, have been a blunder.

The work of fortifying New York City can readily be followed in what may be called its three successive stages. As there was much to do the spade was put to almost continuous use during the seven months from February to August. Ground was first broken under the supervision of General Charles Lee, whom Washington had sent from Boston in January, 1776. The latter suspected from certain movements of the enemy's fleet that they intended to seize the city, which, in his view, would be serving us an "almost irremediable" injury. Lee, who was of the same opinion, reached New York in February, and agreed with the Committee of Safety and a special Committee from Congress upon a general defensive system. After an inspection of the position he reported to Washington, on the 19th, that it could not be made absolutely secure. "What to do with the city," he wrote, "I own puzzles me. It is so encircled with deep navigable waters, that whoever commands the sea must command the town." But

he proposed to make it worth an effort to capture, and assured the committees that while the town could not be converted into a "tenable fortification" it could at least be made "a most advantageous field of battle; so advantageous, indeed, that if our people behave with common spirit, and the commanders are men of discretion, it must cost the enemy many thousands of men to get possession of it." Lee, it is to be observed, offers no suggestion to abandon the place altogether, and he was then looked upon as one of the leading military authorities in the American camp. It was not until September following, after defeats and retreats, that he said that he would have "nothing to do with the islands."

Lee's defensive plan was this: Secure the East River from the Battery to Hell Gate with a series of forts thrown up on both banks, and thus limit the enemy's *sea* control to the harbor and North River. Confine them to a water attack from the south and west and fortify those fronts as strongly as possible. Then, north of the city, on the general line of Grand Street, construct works to check the enemy in case they landed above on the North River shore; and in addition fortify many points on the island to harass landing parties and cover retreat. Upon this plan the East River required careful attention, and the more so because the key to the entire situation lay on that side. That portion of Brooklyn which we know as "Columbia Heights" commanded New

York City and must be held at all hazards. Batteries planted there by the enemy would make the town immediately untenable. An entrenched camp was accordingly marked out between the present Montague and Clark streets, protected by "a chain of redoubts mutually supporting each other," and commanding both the river and the land front facing east. "This is, I think, a capital object," wrote Lee; and he added, to one's surprise, that "should the enemy take possession of New York, when Long Island is in our hands, they will find it almost impossible to subsist." What was to become of the Americans on Long Island with the British surrounding it with their ships and their army on Manhattan, Lee does not explain. Nevertheless, Lee's plan could not be bettered and the work went on. This was the first stage.

The second stage was developed some weeks later when Washington, upon the evacuation of Boston by the British, marched nearly all his army to the new base at New York. The defensive system was extended. It was now proposed to make the East River still more secure, and, furthermore, to attempt to close the passage of the North River to the enemy, which Lee had correctly judged could not be done. Governor's Island was brought into the line, as well as Red Hook at the southern end of the Brooklyn peninsula. General Putnam, who had arrived ten days before the commander-in-chief, noticing the position of those points, wrote to Con-

gress, April 7th: "After getting the works in such forwardness as will be prudent to leave, I propose immediately to take possession of Governor's Island, which I think a very important post. Should the enemy arrive here and get post there, it will not be possible to save the city, nor could we dislodge them without great loss." Without waiting for instructions he embarked a thousand men on the next evening at "candle lighting," and crossing from the Battery to the island threw up breastworks during the night, from which he menaced the enemy's ships then in the harbor. Stronger works were subsequently completed, and the post well garrisoned. Lying at the mouth of the East River, its guns, with those at the Battery, Brooklyn Heights, and other points, together with obstructions in the channel, were expected to close that approach to the ships.

Upon Washington's arrival the encampment on Brooklyn Heights was also changed and enlarged, which, in the light of subsequent events, proved to be a serious matter. If Lee's lines had been retained, in all probability there would have been no Battle of Long Island. But Washington's engineers evidently regarded them as too contracted, and a new position was marked out one mile back of the Heights, between Wallabout Bay and Gowanus Creek, where five redoubts with connecting lines were afterwards erected, and where General Greene was placed in command. Whether this — the most important step taken in defending New York — was a wise altera-

tion in Lee's plan, will be presently noticed. For a third stage in the progress of the works, we have the construction during the summer of the defences at the upper part of the island, intended to cover a retreat by way of Kingsbridge and command the Hudson. The largest of these were Fort Washington, south of the bridge, and Fort Independence on the mainland to the east.

Turning, now, to the enemy, we recall that what had happened around Boston and elsewhere in 1775 — Lexington, Concord, Bunker Hill, Quebec — was hardly more than the *casus belli* of the situation, the incidents precipitating the war, but not war in dead earnest. Those events, always to be famous in our history, were still in the eyes of the mother country scarcely more than preliminaries convincing her that we had accepted the issue, and that she must make more extensive preparations. Hence the abandonment of Boston, and the occupation of New York as the central base of future operations. America well understood that the heavy blows were yet to come; and it was at New York that they fell upon her in full force for the first time. Toward the end of June, 1776, General Howe, with his brother, the admiral, appeared off the harbor. Staten Island was fixed upon for their grand encampment. As the transports with the troops dropped anchor in the Narrows, a stranger on shore, reading their names as they swung around with

the tide, might have imagined that some vast peace commission had arrived with olive branches for our wayward people. The 17th Regulars came in the good ship "Felicity"; the 10th in the "Three Sisters"; the 5th in the "Amity's Admonition"; the 63d in the "Good Intent"; the 1st Grenadiers in the "Friendship"; and the 64th in the "Father's Good Will." As a matter of fact Howe was authorized to offer terms of reconciliation; but the offer came after July 4th, when reconciliation was out of the question. On Staten Island the brigades encamped on the high grounds and near the villages. Among the "Authorities" may be found some interesting letters, now first printed (No. 53), stating how the troops were disposed. The fleet's arrival brought joy to the hearts of the loyalists, and many prominent New Yorkers sought its shelter. Captain Hutcheson, in one of the letters mentioned, writes that Governor Tryon was entertaining "Mr. Barrow, Mr. Kemp, Oliver Delancy, Mr. Apthorp, and Major Bayard. The three last gentlemen made their escape in a canoe from Apthorp's house [West Ninety-first Street] to the *Asia*, lying below the Narrows about ten nights ago. . . . New York is deserted by all the inhabitants who are friends to Government." On the other hand, Frederick Jay had written to his brother John Jay on March 16th: "This day all our militia turned out with great spirit. They are throwing up entrenchments at the Hospital, Bayard's Mount, at the Furnace, Peck's Slip, Beekman's Slip, Ten Eyck's

Wharf, back of the Governor's house and several other places. Never did people in the world act with more spirit and resolution than the New Yorkers do at this present time." The sounds of war were dividing and scattering the population.

Howe opened the campaign with a flank movement. He determined to attack our left, thrown out on Long Island. A combined land and naval assault upon our front and right, that is, upon Governor's Island, the Battery, and the North River works, would doubtless have proved successful, but with heavy loss. He could have compelled the evacuation of New York by sailing around into the Sound and making the move he subsequently directed against White Plains, or by way of the Hudson, which was open to his ships, but in either case he could not have forced Washington to battle, and merely strategical success was not enough. Long Island offered the most tempting field; there the probabilities were that Howe could both outflank and fight.

Crossing the Narrows to Long Island, August 22d, with fifteen thousand troops, the British general occupied the Dutch villages on the flatlands, and then, reënforced with five thousand Hessians, he advanced on the morning of the 27th and fought and won the first battle of the campaign. It was for us the disastrous "Battle of Long Island."¹ Briefly explained,

¹ For an account of this engagement and as the basis of much that appears in these pages, the writer would refer to the result of his own investigations, published some years since by the Long Island Historical Society, Brooklyn, Vol. III. of its "Series."

the Americans were not only outflanked but surprised. Some blunder had occurred. It was to be repeated at Brandywine in 1777, and again, long after, within our own experience, at Chancellorsville, in 1863. Beyond the Brooklyn works ran a low wooded range of hills, skirting the present Greenwood Cemetery and Prospect Park. Washington hoped to be able to prevent the enemy from breaking through this natural barrier, but in any case to inflict serious loss upon him while making the attempt. A stout resistance there might turn Howe from an assault upon the works. But while our detachments — in all less than five thousand men — were watching the passes through the hills at the right and centre, the enemy, by a night march, appeared far over on the left, at the “Jamaica Pass,” captured our only patrol of five mounted officers, and advancing along the road and slopes, compelled the sudden retreat of the parties whose rear was thus threatened. Meanwhile bodies of the enemy pushed through the passes by direct attack, and between the fires in front and flank the Americans were thrown into confusion and badly defeated with the loss of nine hundred prisoners and about two hundred and fifty killed and wounded. The others escaped into the lines. Responsibility for the surprise it is difficult to fix. Commanding officers at the passes blamed each other, and generals in turn explained it off their own shoulders.

It was not the tactical loss of the battle, however,

but the faultiness of the American position on Long Island, that was the alarming, and in the view of certain critics, the inexplicable fact of the campaign.¹ Had not Washington committed himself to overwhelming defeat—the capture of all his troops, seven thousand men—on the Brooklyn front?

Between that front and safe retreat lay the East River. If the enemy had assaulted and broken through our lines during the battle, there could have been no escape for the American force. There was a moment in the forenoon apparently full of danger. While portions of the British army were crowding our men through the woods and driving them back to their defences, the grenadiers in the flanking column headed by Howe approached the works and showed such eagerness to storm the principal fort that, as Howe reports, “it required repeated orders to prevail upon them to desist.” “Had they been permitted to go on,” he adds, “it is my opinion they would have carried the redoubt”; but he wished to spare them. At a later date he regarded the attempt as reckless. Whether the assault would

¹ Reference is made here to the interesting study of the Battle of Long Island and the campaign in general, contributed by Mr. Charles Francis Adams to the “American Historical Review” for July, 1896. The writer presents the extreme view that the attempt to defend New York at all was a mistake, and that, as to the Americans, their salvation was due much less to good generalship than to “the omnipotence of luck in war.” The drift is evidently toward a more critical treatment of our Revolutionary period. Their studies may not take the historical writers of the future as far as Mr. Adams, but they are bound to be more impartial and accurate than some of their predecessors without being any the less appreciative of Washington.

have succeeded is a question, but the possibility of it was perfectly understood by Washington and his generals from the outset, and we have to face the criticism whether they had sufficiently provided against it. It is singular that no one seems to have entered a protest against the situation on that side. Greene, who at a later date urged Washington to abandon New York, had been pushing the Brooklyn works. "The security of New York greatly dependeth on this *pass*," he said to his command on May 5th. There was no error, one must say, in originally taking up that position, for it was a means of delaying the opening of the campaign on the part of the enemy. The show of strength and confidence we made in fortifying the East River, in putting it between two divisions of the army, and in purposing, as our picket lines indicated, to hold the hills beyond the Brooklyn front, had its influence on Howe's plans. This was one point gained. It was another matter to risk a battle there, and in the light of what happened, the modern strategist would most likely have advised Washington, when he found that Howe had landed in force on Long Island, to withdraw immediately, — instead of preparing for action on the 27th, retreat on the 26th to New York. This would probably have been the true solution. The main purpose would have been served, a disaster would have been avoided, and Howe would still be at arm's length. In predetermining this course, Lee's original entrenched camp on Brooklyn Heights could have

been completed and made sufficiently secure to protect the batteries commanding the river. Should the enemy storm that, our loss of a garrison would be small. But, obviously, up to the point of fighting, the extension of Lee's plan was a proper move. Had it not been made Howe might have opened the campaign earlier, crossed to Long Island in July, pushed on to Hell Gate, and gained some weeks for further operations.

But Washington remained on Long Island after the 26th, the battle was fought, and the risk was run. Our historians offer the explanation that a sudden retreat before the enemy the moment he advanced, after the preparations made to resist him, would have betrayed our weakness, demoralized the army, and discouraged the country. They have held that the necessity of the case justified the hazard. There was also the question—a question of fact—as to the strength of the Long Island defences, and the confidence Washington might properly put in his ability to hold them. As Howe was afterwards called to account for not storming them, and justified himself by showing the madness of such an attempt, the point cannot well be ignored. His engineer defended him with evidence to the effect that the rebel line was “a chain of five redoubts, or rather fortresses, with ditches, as had also the lines that formed the intervals, and the whole surrounded with the most formidable abbaties”; and, again, that “they could not be taken by assault, but by

approaches." But then the engineer was the general's witness. As Greene's entire brigade had been at work upon the lines much of the spring and summer, they must have been made defensible. Greene himself thought them such, and had his men "exercised at parapet firing." The commanding officers of regiments were desired, in orders of the day, "to make a line round each of the forts and fortifications for the troops to begin a fire on the enemy if they attempt to storm the works, and the troops are to be told not to fire sooner than the enemy's arrival at these lines." In giving its reasons for retreating from Long Island, Washington's council of officers states that while the redoubts could be depended on, the breastworks were weak, being "abattised with brush only" in some places. On the same morning Adjutant General Reed had written: "We hope to be able to make a good stand as our lines are pretty strong." Take the facts as we may, it is difficult to conceive that the American commanders on the Brooklyn side could have thought of defence behind an obviously weak position. The lines were superior to those on Bunker Hill, albeit on lower ground, and Howe had not forgotten that day.¹

¹ There can be no doubt of the large sacrifice of life the enemy would have suffered had they assaulted on the 27th. The redoubts were manned by Greene's own regiments, which were among the best in the field, and they had been prepared for just this emergency. If some of the intervening lines appeared weak, as to General J. M. Scott, for example, they were covered by the fire from the forts. The largest of the latter was commanded by Colonel Little, who had been at Bunker Hill.

The situation on Long Island involved the calculation of chances. Under the extreme pressure of his surroundings the American chieftain accepted the chances, and escaped the net. At Princeton we shall again find him in a hazardous position, but extricating himself with success and glory.

On the night of the 29th occurred the famous retreat from Long Island. Clearly Washington could not maintain himself on that side, and upon observing that the British intended to approach his lines by parallels, he took the opportunity to withdraw. A council of war met at Philip Livingston's house, which stood on Brooklyn Heights a little south of Wall Street Ferry, and formally accepted the decision of the General who had already made preparations to cross to New York.

The retreat was well-timed and happily effected. Bancroft, the historian, states that the troops were

The possibility of the enemy's ships sailing into the East River and cutting off Washington's retreat is another point. Although this was given as one of the reasons justifying retreat, our blockade of the river against the ships seems to have been regarded during the summer as effective. Ships had passed our batteries on the North River, but on the Jersey side there were few guns. Besides, it was one thing to run by batteries, and another to anchor under them. This the enemy did not attempt, and it is doubtful whether they could have cut off the retreat under our guns on both banks. No ships sailed up the East River until a week or more after the battle, when they could pass near the Brooklyn shore, which the enemy then occupied. The Long Island war council gave every possible reason for authorizing the retreat that occurred to it, as the army and Congress would hold it responsible for the measure; but such contingencies in the case, as the defensibility of the lines and the passage of the river, had existed from the first.

prepared for the movement under the pretence that a night attack upon the enemy was to be attempted. Washington's order on the occasion, since recovered, shows that they were marched to the boats at the ferry on the assurance that fresh troops were to relieve them from New York. In either case the quick-witted soldier could have fathomed the design. By sunrise of the 30th, the entire force, which had been increased to nine thousand since the battle, had safely recrossed the river. Two British officers at Howe's headquarters, to whose valuable journals we shall have occasion to refer again, note the American retreat. One, the deputy adjutant-general, Stephen Kemble, makes the entry: "Friday, August 30th. In the morning, to our great astonishment, found [the rebels] had evacuated all their works on Brookland and Red Hook, without a shot being fired at them." The other, Captain John Montresor, engineer and aide to Howe, writes: "I gave the first information of the enemy's abandoning the works near Brooklyn; and was the first man in them, with one corporal, and six men, in the front of the picquets." Elsewhere he adds, bearing on the question of assault: "I had the greatest difficulty to get through the abatties where no one was to oppose me." Captain Alexander Graydon of Shee's Pennsylvania regiment, present on this retreat, recalls in his own published recollections an historical parallel: "The memoirs of the Duke of Sully," he writes, "relate an operation very similar to it, and to which

much applause is given. This was achieved by the prince of Parma, whose army, lying between Rouen and Candebec, was in the night transported across the Seine, and thus preserved from the destruction that impended from the forces of Henry the Fourth, ready to fall upon it in the morning. 'Could it appear otherwise,' observes the writer, 'than a fable or an illusion? Scarce could the king and his army trust the evidence of their own eyes.' "

II

CAPTURE OF NEW YORK BY THE BRITISH — KIP'S BAY AFFAIR — NARROW ESCAPE OF SILLIMAN'S BRIGADE

THE retreat to New York relieved the great strain to which the American troops had been subjected. Washington represented their exhaustion in his own case when he explained to Congress that his delay of a day in reporting the move was due to the "extreme fatigue" which rendered him "entirely unfit to take pen in hand" or even dictate a letter. During the last forty-eight hours on Long Island, he writes, "I had hardly been off my horse, and never closed my eyes." The demoralization in the ranks was a more serious matter, but that was to lessen as days passed and the enemy failed to push their advantage.

It was nearly three weeks before the next advance. If both generals are chargeable with blunders on Long Island it will be interesting to note how far they profit by or repeat them during the progress of the campaign. Will Howe find Washington within striking distance of him again and in such case will he give his grenadiers full rein? One thing excites our admiration in this disastrous year, and that is Washington's faithful clinging to the soil. At every

turn he looked the enemy squarely in the face — at gunshot distance. He does not fly at once to the mountains as Jay would have had him do. Howe will never reach the Highlands. In the general perspective one sees the staying quality of the defeated Americans. The hopefulness under despair, the tenacious disposition even in retreat, bravery here succeeding cowardice there — all bespoke the promise of the future. The troops fell back only under pressure, sometimes on the run, but not far. All the way through from the Narrows to the Delaware, their rear guard will be found skirmishing with the British van.

Although New York was virtually lost with the Battle of Long Island, Washington occupied it to the last moment. Not that any great risks were to be run in its retention, but that it was not to be given, as Lee suggested, “in fee-simple” to the enemy. Indeed he wrote to Congress on September 2d, “Till of late I had no doubt in my own mind of defending this place, nor should I have yet, if the men would do their duty.” But this extreme confidence in his plans, which is difficult of explanation,—for New York was now obviously untenable even with the best of troops, the moment the enemy moved upon it with a combined armament,—yielded to the plain facts of the situation. He began removing his stores to Kingsbridge and beyond, and asked Congress whether he should leave the city in ashes. Greene and Jay would have burned it, but Congress said “No,” as they had

no doubt of being able to recover it later. This was far the wiser policy, for retaliation would have left us at the mercy of the enemy, who had nothing to lose in the destruction of cities. As it was, not one was burned by design during the war, and, except in minor instances, we were spared the spectacle of useless conflagrations and the added bitterness of feeling that would have followed. As late as the 7th of September the enemy showed no signs of attacking, and Washington summoned a council of his officers to decide upon the question of evacuation and the proper disposition of the army. The council voted to leave five thousand men in the city to preserve appearances as long as possible, to station others at different points on the East River facing the enemy, and to concentrate the greater part of the force at Harlem and Kingsbridge to secure the line of retreat. On the 12th, a second war council decided, by a large majority, to abandon the city altogether as soon as the stores and munitions could be removed. In accordance with this plan General Putnam was continued in the superintendence of stores and the troops in town, while the troops on the East River were to hold the landings until he could leave. At the foot of Grand Street and below were posted the brigades of Parsons and Fellows. Back of Stuyvesant's, about the foot of Twelfth Street, was Scott's New York brigade; at Twenty-third Street, Wadsworth with Connecticut levies; while another similar brigade under Douglas guarded Kip's Bay at the foot of Thirty-fourth Street.

Along the Harlem, fronting Ward's and Randall's islands, older and better troops were stationed.

Here was a temporary, attenuated line facing the enemy on the opposite shore, which could have been pierced at any point, and was weakest at the centre or Thirty-fourth Street. Some risks were run in keeping up this disposition, but then it added several days' delay to the enemy's record. Washington, as he writes, begrudged them "possession." His watchfulness under the circumstances was increased, and he made more than one effort to obtain secret word of their designs. To Heath at Kingsbridge he wrote as early as the 1st "to concert some measures with General Clinton for establishing a channel of information." He thought there might be friends near the enemy's camp who could obtain and send "frequent accounts" of what they were doing. "Leave no stone unturned," he again urged upon Heath, "nor do not stick at expense to bring this to pass, as I was never more uneasy than on account of my want of knowledge on this score."

It was in this connection that NATHAN HALE felt himself called upon to undertake his fatal errand into the British lines. As a captain in the newly organized corps of "Knowlton's Rangers," he was informed of Washington's great anxiety to fathom Howe's intentions. Upon deep reflection he offered his services. "I am fully sensible," he said to a brother officer, "of the consequences of discovery and capture in such a situation. But for a year I have been

attached to the army, and have not rendered any material service, while receiving a compensation for which I make no return. Yet I am not influenced by the expectation of promotion or pecuniary reward. I wish to be useful, and every kind of service, necessary to the public good, becomes honorable by being necessary." Washington permitted him to go, and gave him instructions in the case, the interview being held probably at the chief's headquarters, then at the Mortier mansion on Richmond Hill, on the west side above Canal Street. Hale started in the "second week" of September, went to Stamford on the Connecticut shore, disguised himself as a schoolmaster, crossed to Huntington, Long Island, and made his way to New York. The journey, requiring great circumspection, took time, and he seems not to have reached the camp of the British until after they had captured New York, when his information would not have availed. But that he remained on his mission and had determined not to return without some valuable intelligence for Washington is presumable from the fact that he was not detected until the 21st, and was found with draughts of the enemy's works about him. Taken to Howe's headquarters at the Beekman mansion on East Fifty-first Street, he frankly avowed his errand and was condemned to death as a spy. His execution took place on the following morning at the artillery camp, about half a mile above, near the main road, or in the vicinity of Third Avenue and Sixty-fifth

Street.¹ His statue on lower Broadway impressively commemorates the spirit of the brave youth who could say in his last moments, in the very midst of his victorious enemies, that he only regretted that he had but one life to lose for his country.

Meanwhile Howe, although master of the situation, failed to improve his opportunity upon a large plan. On August 31st, he marched his army from the battle-field of the 27th to Newtown and its vicinity, nearer Hell Gate and the Sound. He was then in position to make the same move that he made on October 12th, when he embarked for Throg's Neck and pushed on to White Plains. Had this been done, Washington would have been compelled to abandon New York and the entire island immediately and in more or less confusion. His army would have been less effective than in October, and Howe would have gained time and the credit of a fine manœuvre. But this was an operation to be planned when his army opened the campaign from Staten Island, and required the simultaneous despatch of ships and many flatboats around Long Island into the Sound to transfer the troops to the Westchester side. No such provision was made. On the contrary Howe appears to have anticipated that his

¹ This fact has been established by Mr. Kelby, librarian of the Historical Society. See Mr. Stevens' article on Hale in the *New York Herald*, Nov. 26, 1893; also the site as marked on map, pp. 50-51.

operations on Long Island would enforce the speedy withdrawal of the Americans from New York, rendering the flank movement unnecessary. From New York he would follow them. But as Washington perversely clung to the city, which Howe did not wish to destroy by bombardment, the latter could not move upon him at once. He lacked sufficient water transportation. With all his naval resources Howe was not prepared to cross the East River for more than two weeks. The entries in Kemble's journal for these interesting days are significantly brief. "Sept. 1st and 2d, Nothing extraordinary." "7th, Nothing material." "10th, All quiet." "12th, Nothing particular." "14th, Very quiet." Howe was making demonstrations to cross at Harlem by way of Ward's and Randall's islands, and was doubtless puzzled that Washington should still keep his batteries manned in the city. He expected to manœuvre him out of it. The navy, however, presently came to his assistance, and by the evening of the 14th, at different intervals, five frigates, six transports, and one hundred barges had run the fire of our guns in town and anchored in the East River above Twenty-third Street. On the next day, the 15th, Howe crossed. It was nineteen days since the Battle of Long Island — not very rapid campaigning. We must give Washington the credit of enforcing much of this delay.

The incidents of Sunday, the 15th, when the British captured New York, have a bearing upon the

action of Harlem Heights on the following day. The American soldier was inspired by the contrast presented. It would seem that Howe originally proposed to break through our line at Harlem in the hope of entrapping many of our troops below, but the American battery at Horn's Hook, East Eighty-ninth Street, remained unsilenced, and he landed further down. The enemy's firing from Hallet's Point opposite the Hook had failed to drive off our gunners. Kemble records on the 9th that "our proposed attack of Hell Gate redoubt, and landing there thought very hazardous by many. The strength of the tides must unavoidably make our landings very difficult, as well as dangerous, from the length of the time it will take between them." Montresor claims that it was he who advised the landing where it was finally made at Kip's Bay, while Admiral Howe informs us that a feint was to have been attempted at the same time at Harlem, but the pilots declined to take men-of-war into the Hell Gate waters.

At Kip's Bay, foot of Thirty-fourth Street, accordingly, the attack was made. Douglas' ill-sorted brigade was there behind low breastworks, little dreaming what was impending. Douglas himself was a good soldier and had lately written to his wife that the American position on the Island was untenable, but that he must not be "too free" with his opinions. "Our generals," he said, "are faithful and good, no one can doubt, but we have not

got experience which will teach America wisdom in her wars, as it did Peter the Great." There was plenty of experience in store. At daybreak the five frigates took position at Kip's Bay close to the shore, and at about eleven o'clock opened a furious and sweeping fire upon Douglas' militiamen. At the same time Sir Henry Clinton's division of Light troops and Reserves was rowed across the river from Newtown Creek in eighty-four boats, and under cover of the cannonade landed at the Bay.

A British officer, Captain William Evelyn, impressed with the sight, wrote to his mother that "the amazing fire from the shipping, the confusion and the dismay of the rebels, the Light Infantry clambering up the steep and just accessible rocks, the water covered with boats full of armed men pressing eagerly toward the shore, was certainly one of the grandest and most sublime scenes ever exhibited."¹ Douglas' men fled, unable to resist such an attack. Wadsworth's brigade below also fell back. All retreated toward the main Kingsbridge road, which there ran along the lines of Fourth and Lexington avenues, and by which they could reach Harlem and the heights beyond in safety. The enemy followed rapidly, the various corps seeming to vie with each other in fulfilling the expectations of their chief, who two days before had praised them

¹ Document, No. 51, among the "Authorities." Also, as to further particulars of the "Kip's Bay Affair," see Vol. III., L.I. Historical Soc. Series, p. 232.

for their skilful application of the bayonet and their fearlessness in American woods.¹ The Light Infantry under General Leslie struck off to the right and occupied the road near Forty-second Street. The Grenadiers under Cornwallis and Vaughn moved straight across, up Thirty-fourth Street, we may say, to Murray Hill, while the Hessian Light troops under Donop turned to the left and succeeded in intercepting three or four hundred of Wadsworth's brigade somewhere on the line of Twenty-third Street, east of Fourth Avenue. This was the principal loss sustained by the Americans during the day. Parsons' and Scott's brigades below could see the crossing of the enemy, and, leaving their positions in time, marched up the Bowery into the Bloomingdale road, just escaping the Hessians at about Madison Square. Silliman's brigade with some of Knox's artillery companies was still in the city, but, thanks to the enemy's oversight, presently escaped.

While all this was going on — the brilliant landing of the British, the more or less orderly but hurried retreat of some of our troops, the confused

¹ Howe's Orders, dated Newtown, L.I., Sept. 13th: "An attack upon the enemy being shortly intended, the soldiers are reminded of their evident superiority on the 27th of August by charging the Rebels with Bayonets even in the woods where they had thought themselves invincible: they now place their security in slight breastworks of the weakest Construction, and which are to be carried with little loss by the same high spirited mode of attack. The Gen'l therefore recommends to the troops an entire dependence on their Bayonets with which they will always command that success which their bravery so well deserves."

flight of others, the quick advance of Clinton's Light Division from the river towards Murray Hill—in other words, while we were suffering a panic and the enemy enjoying a chase, the two most anxious and interested men in our army, Washington and Putnam, were riding at full gallop from opposite directions to the scene of action. Washington, on the evening before, had moved his headquarters from Richmond Hill to the Morris (Jumel) mansion, still standing, at about One Hundred and Sixty-first Street, east of St. Nicholas Avenue, and had expected to withdraw all his troops to that vicinity on the very day of the enemy's attack. Putnam remained at his city quarters, No. 1 Broadway, to superintend, as we have seen, the final evacuation of the town. On the early morning of the 15th the two generals were more than ten miles apart. As soon as the cannonade of the men-of-war at Kip's Bay was heard, both hastened to the vicinity—Washington, of course, as commander-in-chief, and Putnam because his troops below would be in extreme danger if the enemy landed above. They met, with other general officers, somewhere on Murray Hill, probably in a cross road on the line of Forty-second Street then connecting the Bloomingdale road (now Broadway) with the Kingsbridge road at Lexington Avenue. The hour of day was about twelve o'clock.

Washington reached the spot only to find, to his great surprise and mortification, that our troops were flying before the enemy, and that others, ordered to

support them, were in confusion. With the officers around him he quickly rode in among the fugitives and did his best to face them about. We have it on official record that he shouted out to the men, "Take to the wall! Take to the cornfield!" but nothing could stop them. The chief's indignation was unbounded, and lashing some of the runaways over the shoulders with his cane, he demanded with intense feeling whether these were the men with whom he was to defend America! The scene of this incident can be located with considerable precision near Park Avenue and Fortieth Street. With "Bull Run" following nearly a century later, we may interpose a word for these fugitives of Seventy-Six, for whom our historians generally have no mercy, and recall that most of them were poorly armed militia, who had been away from home but a few weeks, that it was not a momentary sense of fear that had created the panic, but a sustained sense of danger aroused by all that they had seen and experienced for some hours,—the terrible fire of the ships, which veterans could not have withstood, and the crossing of a formidable flotilla,—while the knowledge that the best part of the army was safe above them at Harlem was not likely to lessen the haste of their retreat. The rolls of the Continental army show that many of these Kip's Bay cowards, officers and men alike, remained in the service to the end and cancelled their record for this day by gallant conduct on other fields.

Most of our troops had retreated to and along the Bloomingdale road further west, and on to Harlem Heights, but they were not pursued. The day was one of intense heat, and as Clinton had no cavalry he could not expect to overtake the Americans. At Murray Hill, along the line of Park Avenue, he halted until the remainder of the army, or six more brigades, could cross. This took time, and it was not until four or five o'clock in the afternoon that he was ready to move again.

Meanwhile, what about Silliman's brigade, and the artillery down in the city? The former were posted at the works on the line of Grand Street, west of the Bowery. Finding that the British had landed above, Putnam attempted a bold manœuvre. Dashing back from Murray Hill down the road, and slipping by the Hessians, he proposed to extricate Silliman by getting past the enemy through the lanes and woods on the west side. Putnam's aid, Major Aaron Burr, seems to have bravely taken the responsibility of starting Silliman along, and the general, joining them at some point, the brigade, after a hard march and narrow escape, reached Harlem Heights late in the evening, when it had been given up as lost. Most of the artillerymen also escaped, but without their guns. The experiences of Captains Samuel Shaw and Sebastian Bauman of this corps are given by themselves in letters Nos. 12 and 38 among the "Authorities." Silliman himself tells us it was a most trying march, and David Humphreys,

one of his adjutants, writes about Putnam's efforts to get them through. "I had frequent opportunities that day," he says, "of beholding him, for the purpose of issuing orders, and encouraging the troops, flying on his horse, covered with foam, wherever his presence was most necessary. Without his extraordinary exertions, the guards must have been inevitably lost, and it is probable the entire corps would have been cut in pieces."

Why the enemy failed to head off and capture Putnam and Silliman has been usually explained by the familiar incident of Mrs. Murray's hospitality. Robert Murray, father of Lindley Murray, the grammarian, was a well-to-do Quaker merchant whose country seat stood at about the corner of Park Avenue and Thirty-sixth Street. His farm included all the high ground in the vicinity, and was known as "Inclenberg." Being a loyalist, it is assumed that his wife was one. The British generals, including Howe, who had come over with or soon after the advance, are represented as having adjourned to the Murray mansion for lunch. General Vaughn had been slightly wounded in advancing up the slope, and was probably cared for in this house. Mrs. Murray, we are told, entertained these officers so agreeably on the occasion that they neglected to run a cordon of guards or detachments across the Island to intercept any late retreating rebels. Another version makes Mrs. Murray an ardent American sympathizer, who, knowing that time was the one

thing our distressed troops needed that day, exhausted the resources of her wit and larder to detain the generals long enough to save Silliman. The incident probably occurred, but it fails as an explanation. Howe is simply chargeable with over-confidence, irrespective of lunch. He knew nothing about Silliman, and it is difficult to see how Mrs. Murray, whether a friend or foe, could have known. Upon landing at Thirty-fourth Street Donop and his Hessians had been sent to the main road south of Murray Hill, and would naturally occupy the point of its junction with the Bloomingdale road at the present corner of Twenty-third Street and Fifth Avenue. It was evidently believed that all the rebels had made good their retreat, or that any large body must attempt to pass at that point. Silliman, however, pushed along a mile to the west, near Ninth and Tenth Avenues. That the British officers were outwitted by a genial hostess is less likely than that they had confidently assumed that the first effect of their early morning movements would be to clear the city immediately of every American. The praiseworthy feature of the affair is the resolution of our belated troops to push through and rejoin the main army when they felt that the chances of success were heavily against them.

Later in the afternoon Clinton's corps advanced up the Kingsbridge road to encamp for the night. Howe's critics can here find a pretty commentary on his generalship in the fact that while his lordly troops

were marching along the east side of what is now Central Park, Putnam's and Silliman's sweltering militiamen were toiling up on a parallel line west of the park, and somewhat below him, without his knowing it. As Clinton's column neared the corner of what are now Ninety-sixth Street and Fifth Avenue, where the Kingsbridge road entered the park and went on through McGowan's Pass, it found drawn up before it Colonel Smallwood's regiment of Marylanders, which had been posted there for observation and to cover the retreat of our artillerymen from the Horn's Hook battery. Smallwood reports that the enemy manoeuvred with the view of outflanking him, when he retired and joined our main army on Harlem Heights at dusk. From Ninety-sixth Street there ran across the park a road, called the "New Bloomingdale cross road," which came out on the west side at about Ninety-first Street and continued to the Bloomingdale road. Instead of keeping on to McGowan's Pass, Clinton's corps turned into this cross road and reached the Bloomingdale end just as Silliman's troops were passing north. Had the British been a few minutes earlier Silliman would have been intercepted. He was obliged, indeed, to keep the enemy's advance at bay with some of his men while the others continued to retreat. Almost the only man to fall in this brief skirmishing was the commanding officer of the last regiment in the line of march — Lieutenant-Colonel Jabez Thompson, of the second Connecticut militia. Silliman retired to the Ameri-

can camp, while the enemy, darkness now setting in, bivouacked for the night where they were.

Late in the afternoon a detachment from the enemy's fleet had taken possession of the city, and thus New York and the island south of Harlem passed into British hands. The first object of their campaign had been secured; but it was September 15th, or two months and a half since they had arrived with their powerful armament.

As to criticisms suggested by these movements, following the Battle of Long Island, we may hold Howe responsible for delay when he was in perfect control of the situation. With a coöperating fleet he permitted the East River to stand as a barrier between himself and the "rebels" for nineteen days. After crossing he missed the easy capture of an entire brigade and some general officers. On the other hand Washington, it has been observed, delayed one day too long in evacuating the city and island below Harlem. Had he withdrawn on the 14th there would have been no Kip's Bay disgrace. We can justify him in remaining in the city as long as the enemy took no boats or ships into the East River. It was known that they had accumulated many of the former by the 12th, when a speedy withdrawal would have been advisable. When four men-of-war passed up on the evening of the 14th it would seem that there was not an hour to lose. But it was much to have kept the enemy at bay in spite of a panic and loss of a few militiamen. The main

body of our troops had not been in peril since the Long Island defeat. Discouraged as he was with the conduct of the men on the 15th, and obliged to report another retreat, with loss of stores and prisoners, Washington could still look across the lines that evening and reflect that thus far he had been taken at a disadvantage; that opportunities would yet offer to face the enemy on more equal terms; that the British navy would be a less important factor in the movements to follow, and that with a better organized and appointed army, such as Congress was soon to provide for, he could present a different record in the field. Certainly the errors and experiences of this summer's campaign at New York were not to be repeated during the war.

III

POSITION OF THE TWO ARMIES, SEPTEMBER 16TH — COLONEL KNOWLTON AND HIS RANGERS.

WITH the foregoing review of the earlier events of this campaign we reach the 16th of September, when the Battle of Harlem Heights occurred. A brief chapter on the position of the two armies on the morning of the action will assist us in following the details.

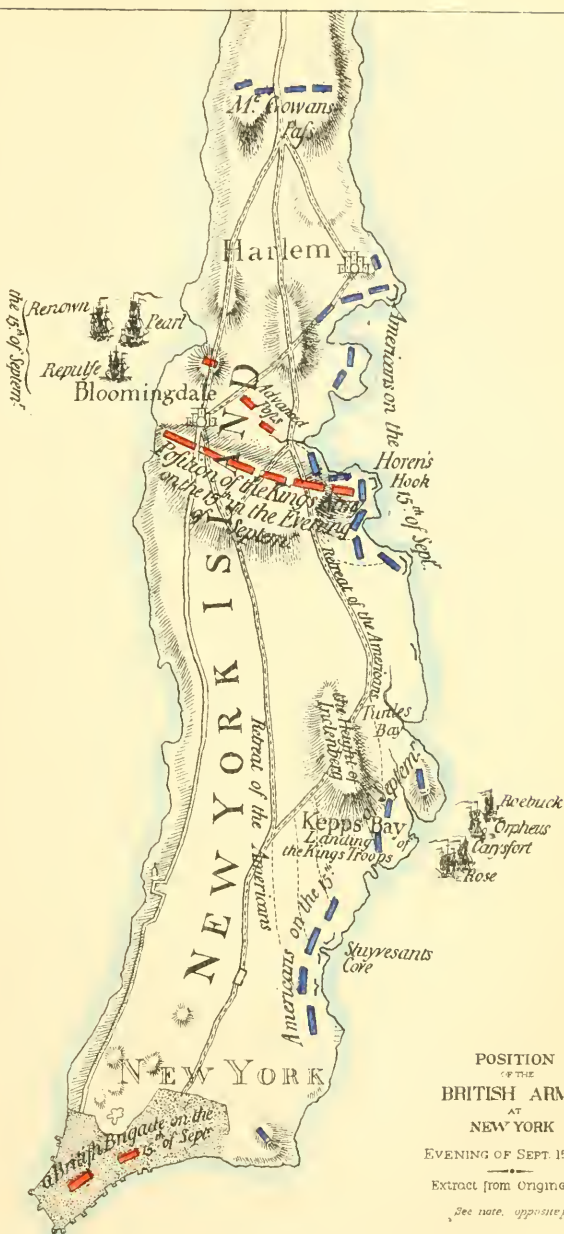
It is important, first, to ascertain where the British were encamped on the evening of the 15th. We left them at dusk along the Bloomingdale cross road — in what is now Central Park, on the line of Ninety-first to Ninety-sixth Street. Sir William Howe reports that, “the position the king’s army took, on the 15th in the evening, was with the right to Horen’s Hook, and the left at the North River near to Bloomingdale.” It is this *left* which we must fix accurately. “Near to Bloomingdale” might be too indefinite for our purposes, did not other references fully explain Howe’s meaning. On the maps of the period “Bloomingdale” is marked by name at a point near the house of Charles Apthorpe, which stood, until pulled down in 1891, just below the cross road or south of Ninety-first Street a little west of Ninth

Avenue. That section was known generally as Bloomingdale, but the Apthorpe mansion, the Striker place, just above on the Hudson, and the cross road gave it some centrality. Adjutant-General Kemble is more definite. He says: "The advance of our army marched to the Black Horse, and across from thence by Apthorpe's House to North River and had very near cut off Mr. Putnam's retreat, who brought off the Rebel rear guard from New York, most of whom and their troops in general got off by the North River road." Captain Hutcheson confirms him in his letter of September 24th, 1776, with the statement that "our advanced post is at the Black Horse tavern, and the Army is posted from the North to the East rivers quite across the country above Mr. Apthorp's." Kemble and Hutcheson, as well as Montresor, — all officers at the British headquarters, — are the best of authorities, and only recently have their letters and journals become accessible. Where before we were uncertain, we now have the desired information. Howe's *left* is very clearly associated with Apthorpe's. "Near" to Bloomingdale in his report means near to this house — across "by" it, or "above" it, say Kemble and Hutcheson.

Furthermore, certain references will be made, in connection with the battle, to two other houses or farms lying north of Apthorpe's, which make it impossible to put Howe's "evening" encampment much further up on that flank. Near the present

One Hundred and Sixth Street, west of the Bloomingdale road, stood the stone farmhouse of Nicholas Jones, and beyond, at the termination of the road (One Hundred and Fifteenth Street and Riverside Drive), was Adrian Hoaglandt's.¹ East of Hoaglandt's, at the northeast corner of what are now the grounds of St. Luke's Hospital, lived Harman Vandewater. Hoaglandt's and Vandewater's were then the only two houses on the high grounds which, for many years, while the Bloomingdale Asylum stood there, were called Bloomingdale Heights, and which are now commonly known as "Morning-

¹ MAP SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE BRITISH, EVENING OF SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1776. — The map on the opposite page presents an important piece of evidence confirmatory of what is said above respecting the enemy's *left*. This is an extract from a larger plan of the operations around New York, published in London late in 1776, and is of special interest as showing the position of Howe's encampment after the Kip's Bay affair. It extends across the island, just about where the authorities mentioned in the text would locate it, — Horn's Hook on the right, Bloomingdale on the left, with the ships above. It lies some distance below Harlem, or "Harlem Heights." One inaccuracy appears in placing McGowan's Pass north of Harlem instead of south. The name should be brought down to the first cross-roads on the main highway. On a later edition of the map, showing changes of position, the "Pass" is correctly indicated. Copies of the originals of both editions are in the possession of the writer. — This map may be compared with the full-page plan (pp. 50-51) representing the position of the two armies at the time of and after the battle. It will be observed that the distance between the advanced lines of the armies is, relatively, nearly the same in each. The outposts do not immediately face each other, but a space of a mile intervenes — an important point, as will be seen.





side Heights." Kemble will tell us that Jones' was the scene of a picket surprise the next morning, the 16th, and our principal authority on the movements of the Hessians states¹ that the British outguards had been posted the previous evening "near to John's House." On the next day they will be fighting on "Hoyland's" or Hoaglandt's hill. Jones' and Hoaglandt's thus must both be beyond the British encampment and outposts on the evening in question. That encampment extended, as Howe reports, along the strong heights on the east side (about Ninetieth Street) to the line of the park at the cross road, near where the old "Black Horse tavern" stood until 1808, then through fields now included in the park, and on by Apthorpe's to the North River. This *left* probably rested on Striker's Bay (Ninety-sixth Street), and was covered by three men-of-war which had sailed up in the morning. In a word, we must place the encampment below the general line of what is now One Hundredth Street, with no advanced posts or pickets thrown out beyond One Hundred and Fifth Street.

On the larger plan of the field it will be observed that the topography presents almost as marked a dividing line between the opposing armies as the East River had just presented. Each occupies ground naturally strong, the Americans having the advantage. Upon deciding to withdraw from New

¹ The work of Max von Elking on the part taken by German troops in the American war, 1776-1783.

York, Washington and his generals fixed upon the heights north of Harlem Plains as the best position to occupy. Not all the Island was to be abandoned because the city had been lost; in addition, the importance of holding Fort Washington above as a defence of the Hudson River still impressed our officers. After the Kip's Bay retreat, the troops encamped on the site referred to, which has long been known to us as "Washington Heights." The camp extended from Washington's headquarters, One Hundred and Sixty-first Street, down to the Manhattanville depression or "Hollow Way," — the valley extending diagonally from One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street and Eighth Avenue to the Hudson River at One Hundred and Thirtieth Street. By the army it was generally called camp "Harlem Heights," although this name was applied until many years after the Revolution to all the high ground around Harlem flatlands, including Morning-side Heights and the north end of Central Park.¹

On these heights Washington had about nine thousand men fit for duty on the morning of the 16th, substantially the same force that retreated from Long Island. General Heath had four or five thousand more at Kingsbridge. The divisions of Spencer, Putnam, and Greene were with the commander-in-chief. Less than one-half the troops were Continentals, enlisted for the year; the re-

¹ As to the application of the name "Harlem Heights," see further in the chapter on the "Previous Versions of the Battle."

mainder were six months' state levies or three months' militiamen.

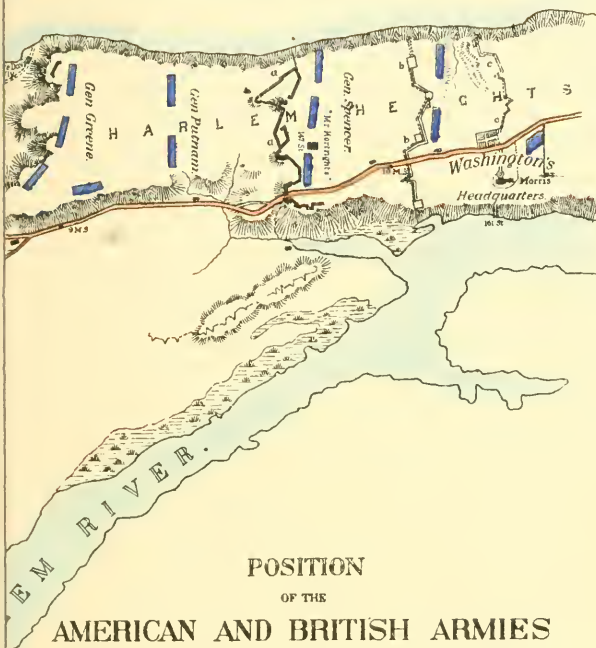
In the new position, the American soldier could feel a certain sense of relief and security. Nature assisted in restoring his resolution. The Manhattanville "Hollow Way" lay in front; on the right, the Hudson River; on the left, the low lands of Harlem; in the rear, the lines of retreat were protected. Woods and knolls concealed the encampment. As the site could be made practically impregnable with defensive works, no time was lost in erecting them. In the course of three weeks three lines of entrenchments and redoubts were projected across the heights, as indicated on the map of the position.¹ The most southerly of these, on the general line of the present One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, was the one first thrown up, and included three small redoubts. It was begun by the troops on the 16th of September, during the Harlem action, and, although somewhat weaker than the second line constructed later, it has been strongly drawn on the plan to emphasize its immediate relation to the day's occurrences. At this point Manhattan Island narrows sharply on the east side, with Harlem flatlands terminating above in a marshy edge. The slope of the heights becomes more

¹ This ground was surveyed by the British engineer Santhier immediately after the fall of Fort Washington, November 16th. His original draught, now in the Library of Congress, indicates the lines with great clearness.

rugged and abrupt, and the plateau at the top affords an admirable defensive front, hardly a mile in length. It was this point that Washington determined to fortify, and it was here that most of his troops — Spencer's and part of Putnam's divisions — were posted as they came up from below on the evening of the 15th. General George Clinton indicates the position of this line in his letter of the 21st (No. 9), where he says: "Our army, at least one Division of it, lay at Col. Morris's and so southward to near the Hollow Way which runs across from Harlem Flat to the North River at Matje Davit's Fly. About halfway between which two places our lines run across the River [Island] which indeed at that time were only begun, but are now in a very defensible state." This, with other references,¹ locates the first line at One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, which is almost precisely "halfway" between the points named. The second line, with four redoubts, ran along One Hundred and Fifty-third to One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street; while a third, without redoubts, was begun but not completed at One Hundred and Sixty-first Street. The position was thus firmly secured. Below the lines, overlooking the Hollow Way, Greene's division was posted as a strong advance corps to guard against surprise and dispute the intervening ground with the enemy should they attempt to advance upon the works.

¹ See Chapter, "Previous Versions of the Battle."

E R .



POSITION

OF THE

AMERICAN AND BRITISH ARMIES

NEAR

HARLEM

from Sept. 16 to Oct. 12, 1776.

REFERENCES

- aa-First LINE OF WORKS THROWN UP BY THE AMERICANS DURING THE BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS 147 ST
- bb-SECOND AND STRONGER LINE ABOUT 155 ST BUILT LATER
- cc-THIRD LINE - 161 ST - UNFINISHED

[See note, next page]



HUDSON RIVER.



EAST RIVER.

POSITION
OF THE
AMERICAN AND BRITISH ARMIES
NEAR
HARLEM
from Sept 16 to Oct 12 1876

RED LINE OF BATTLES SHOWS THE POSITIONS OF THE AMERICAN
ARMY BEFORE THE BATTLE OF HARLEM. BLUE LINE SHOWS
THE POSITIONS OF THE BRITISH ARMY. ST. LINE SHOWS
THE POSITIONS OF THE AMERICAN ARMY. (See note, next page)



The larger map also shows the position of the enemy more in detail.¹ Howe established his headquarters at the Beekman mansion then standing on the line of what is now Fifty-first Street, near First Avenue. This was central to his command—the main body being above him, the city below, and a brigade on Long Island. His headquarters have sometimes been placed at Apthorpe's house at the front, upon the information of a British deserter who told Washington that he "believed" he was there. The best authority, however, is the writer of the letter (No. 49), who states that "General Howe's headquarters are at Lieutenant-Colonel James Beekman's house on the East River near Turtle Bay."² Apthorpe's was probably occupied by Sir Henry Clinton, who had

¹ MAP SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE TWO ARMIES NEAR HARLEM, FROM SEPTEMBER 16TH TO OCTOBER 12TH, 1776.—The topography of this map has been compiled from official charts of the vicinity, and the position of the troops given as indicated in the orders of the two commanding generals. Washington's are to be found in Force's "Archives," and Howe's in the Order-book of the Brigade of Guards in the possession of the New York Historical Society. The main points of interest have been noticed in the text. It shows at a glance that space enough lay between the advanced posts of the two armies on the west side for a considerable engagement. After the "affair" the armies faced each other until October 12th, without much change of position.

² This letter has not appeared before among documents bearing on this campaign. Though brief, it contains important facts. Mr. Lossing was the first of our historians to put Howe at Beekman's. See his "Field Book of the Revolution," Vol. II., pp. 609, 611, where he offers good evidence from the American side.

immediate command of the advance. Cornwallis may have made the "Black Horse tavern" his quarters. These two generals would thus be on the two main roads. Earl Percy we know to have quartered "near Hurst's wharf," which would put him in the vicinity of Kip's Bay. This officer commanded the "second line," and from the position of his quarters, it is inferred that his troops were encamped as indicated on the map.¹ The line of works running across from Jones' on the left, through upper Central Park, on the line of One Hundred and Sixth or Seventh Street, to McGowan's Pass, is an important feature, to which some reference will be made in the chapter on the battle.

Here also, as introductory to the events of the 16th, we must make mention of Colonel Thomas Knowlton and his Rangers, who brought on and were especially conspicuous in the fighting of the day.

In his historical painting of the Battle of Bunker Hill, Trumbull sacrifices details of position to give prominence to the inspiring leaders in the action. Warren, Prescott, Putnam, Knowlton, the giant

¹ Howe's orders for Sept. 16, 1776, issued probably before the Harlem action was in full progress, read as follows: "The Brigade of Light Infantry and the reserve, the 3d and 4th Brigades of British, and the Hessian Brigades of Stern and Donop are to be under the command of Lieutenant-General Clinton, who will give his orders about posting them. The Brigade of Guards with the 2d and 6th Brigade of the British are to be under the command of Lieutenant-General Earl Percy, who will likewise give his orders for posting them."

McClery, are in the thick of the fray, in front and to the right and left of the "Pine Tree" standards. The characteristic figure in the group is the hatless and ununiformed Knowlton. He suggests the yeoman or the farmer from the plough. In his shirt sleeves, with powder-horn and flint-lock musket, he is braving the regulars at what seems to be the danger point in the fight.

Captain Thomas Knowlton, as he then ranked, had already seen something of war, having been with Putnam on more than one of the French and Indian campaigns. He hailed from Ashford, in eastern Connecticut, and at the time of the Lexington alarm was thirty-six years old. "In person," says his biographer,¹ "he was six feet high, erect and elegant in figure, and formed more for activity than strength. He had light complexion, dark hair, and eyes of deep spiritual beauty. His literary education was confined to the narrow routine of studies then taught in the common schools. Yet the possession of an intellect naturally bright, and quick to profit by the experiences and associations of military life, caused his companionship to be sought by the most cultivated. He was courteous and affable in manners, and wholly free from ostentation and egotism. Calm and collected in battle, and, if necessity required, ready to lead where any could be found to follow — he knew no fear of danger. The favorite of superior officers,

¹ "Memoir of Colonel Thomas Knowlton." By Ashbel Woodward, M.D., 1861.

the idol of his soldiers and fellow-townsmen, he fell [at Harlem Heights] universally lamented."

With many of his neighbors Knowlton promptly answered the Lexington call, and a few weeks later appeared as captain of his town company in Putnam's regiment. When informed by his commander that Bunker Hill was to be seized and fortified, he replied — so his biographer tells us — that the project was unmilitary and hazardous; "but," he added, "if you are determined to go upon the hill, I shall accompany you with my men and exert myself to the uttermost." From that action he returned to camp with a reputation as one of the stoutest defenders of the post and rail fence on Prescott's left. Concerned in other exploits around Boston, he received promotion, and in the summer of 1776 we find him serving as lieutenant-colonel of Durkee's Continental regiment with the army at New York. After the Battle of Long Island, in which Knowlton and a select party from his regiment narrowly escaped capture, he organized a small corps of "Rangers," such as Rogers, Putnam, and others had led in the previous war. It was composed of about one hundred and twenty volunteers from Connecticut and other Eastern regiments, and was expected to be constantly at the front watching the enemy's movements. The roster of the detachment (No. 39) in the "Authorities" shows that it was ably officered, Nathan Hale being one of the captains. Captain Thomas Grosvenor, whom Trumbull has also put in

the foreground at Bunker Hill, was another. Knowlton's son and brother were in the corps. One soldier who belonged to it remembered long after that only those could join who were willing "to serve either by water or by land, by night or by day." Another, in speaking of Knowlton's leadership, recalled that he never said "Go on, boys!" but always "Come on, boys." This, the first body of the kind in Washington's army, was to be succeeded each campaign by a picked corps of Light Infantry, organized on the plan of the similar corps in the British army. When the enemy landed at Kip's Bay, the Rangers were on duty along the Harlem shore, where the principal attack was expected, and had no share in the day's events. On the following morning they will precipitate our battle, and thereafter be constantly active in front of the lines until, with the capture of Fort Washington on November 16th, they disappear from the service as prisoners of war.

IV

THE BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS

THERE were anxious misgivings in the American camp that evening as the demoralized militia came in from Kip's Bay, and officers and soldiers realized how steadily the campaign was going against them. One month before their outposts were on the Brooklyn hills; now New York had been lost and retreat was the order of the day. Nevertheless let us again take note how small a gap they left between themselves and their powerful foe. The enemy, in full force, were but a mile and a half below them. Confidence had not wholly yielded to the anxiety of the moment. To Congress Washington wrote early on the following morning: "We are now encamped with the main body of the army on the Heights of Harlem, where I should hope the enemy would meet with defeat in case of an attack, if the generality of our troops would behave with tolerable bravery. But experience, to my extreme affliction, has convinced me that this is rather to be wished for than expected. However, I trust that there are many who will act like men, and show themselves worthy of the blessings of freedom." The events of the day proved that this trust was not misplaced.

Many a soldier responded to the sentiment which moved young Captain Samuel Shaw to write to his father on the 18th: "I hope, by the blessing of Heaven, affairs will be in such a posture this way in a few days, as to bid defiance to their future attempts. Now or never is the time to make a stand, and, rather than quit our post, be sacrificed to a man. For my own part, it is but little I can do, but so long as the war lasts, I devote myself to it;" and for seven years longer, to the end of the war, he continued in the field.

Whether the British would follow up their success the next morning remained to be seen. It is now known that they had no thought of doing so. But leaving nothing to conjecture, Washington directed Knowlton to make a reconnoissance of the enemy's position early on the 16th and report upon their movements.¹ He himself was up at sunrise writing and despatching letters to Congress, when reports came in that the enemy had appeared in several large bodies upon the plains below. These reports proved to be unfounded, but he rode down from his headquarters to the most advanced posts overlooking the Manhattanville Valley, where Greene was in command, "to put matters in a proper situation if they should attempt to come on."

¹ Washington to Congress, morning of the 16th: "I have sent out some reconnoitring parties to gain intelligence, if possible, of the disposition of the enemy, and shall inform Congress of every material event by the earliest opportunity."

Knowlton and his Rangers promptly moved out before dawn and felt their way southward towards the British lines. Precisely what course they took — whether, starting from the right of our picket posts at about One Hundred and Thirty-second Street near the Hudson, they followed the line of Riverside Drive, or whether they set out from “Point of Rocks” and marched down the old Harlem Lane towards McGowan’s Pass and then turned west to the Bloomingdale road by which Silliman escaped the evening before — is unknown and in fact immaterial. It is enough to know that when we hear of them a little later, they were at the most important point on the enemy’s front. We find them stirring up their pickets on their left — that *left* which rested, as we have seen, somewhere on the Bloomingdale road not far above Apthorpe’s, and between which and our pickets at the Hollow Way intervened the wooded and rolling grounds of the two farms on Morningside Heights. Had the enemy attempted an advance by that flank, they could have approached within easy striking distance without displaying their force; while an advance on their right from McGowan’s up Harlem Lane could have been observed at once from the American posts at Point of Rocks. Knowlton’s party was thus scouting in the right direction, along the westerly side near the Hudson, where the enemy were screened from view.

It was not until they reached Jones’ farmhouse,

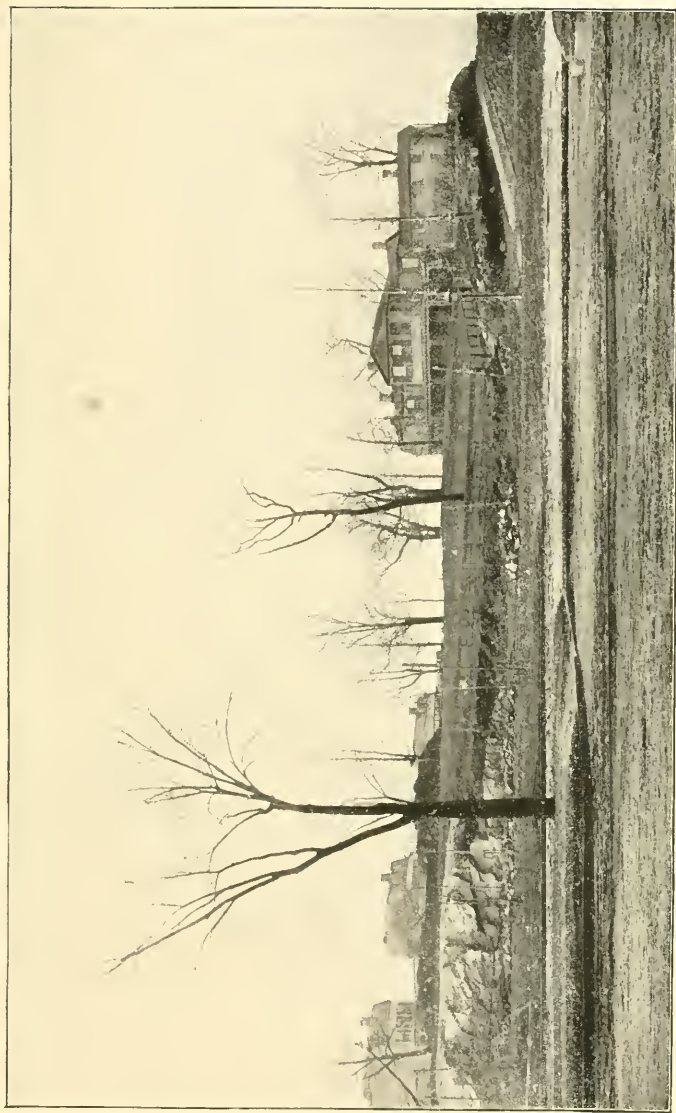
about sunrise, that the Rangers encountered the British pickets. This was the stone house already referred to as standing on the line of One Hundred and Sixth Street, west of the Boulevard, and its identification is an important fact in the narrative.¹ It establishes the southern boundary of the battle-field. In this vicinity the skirmishing of the early morning began, and here the day's fighting ended eight or ten hours later. That previous writers on this action make no mention of Jones' as a guiding-point in the topography and refer but briefly to the Rangers' "day-brake" scouting, is, of course, due to the absence of the references in the case which have since become available. Here, again, we are under obligations to Kemble, Montresor, Hall, and others for the much-needed information. Kemble, the adjutant-general, whose accurate diary has helped us out in following the incidents of the 15th, makes this explicit entry for the next day: "Monday, Sept. 16th. In the morning a party of the enemy showed themselves at Jones's House." So too, Captain Hall, in his volume on the earlier campaigns of the war, writes: "On the 16th, in the morning, a body of the enemy moved out of their lines on Morris's Heights and appeared at a house near the edge of a wood, in front of our

¹ "To be Sold a Farm at Bloomingdale, about 200 acres more or less, seven miles from the city; on said farm is a large strong stone built house, pleasantly situated near the North River; conditions for the sale will be made easy to a purchaser. For particulars apply to Nicholas Jones on the premises, by whom an indisputable title will be given."

[The Royal Gazette, New York, Oct. 28, 1780.]

left flank, on which two companies of light infantry were sent to dislodge them." This is a clear reference to Jones', as there was no other house above Apthorpe's on the Bloomingdale road but Hoaglandt's, which was too far north. Von Elking, who places the British pickets "near to Johns house" the evening before, confirms the foregoing, while Sir William Howe in his report of the affair obviously locates his outposts in the same vicinity, or south of the Morningside plateau, when he says that, "On the 16th in the morning a large party of the enemy having passed under cover of the woods near to the advanced posts of the army *by way of Vandewater's Heights*, the 2d and 3d battalions of light infantry, supported by the 42d regiment, pushed forward and drove them back to their entrenchments." Referring to Vandewater's Height, Howe may have intended either Vandewater's farm or the high ground of Morningside Heights generally, but in any case, by making Knowlton approach his posts "by way of" that site, he puts the posts *south* of it or somewhere near Jones'. "By way of" presents no ambiguity; and, no doubt, it was from information furnished by Montresor, who was familiar with this locality and from whom we shall presently hear again, that Howe was enabled to describe the topography so accurately. But Kemble's statement, amply substantiated by Howe, Hall, and Von Elking, settles the matter. The Rangers first "showed themselves at Jones's house."

The important fact is thus established that



SITE OF NICHOLAS JONES' HOUSE, 1776.

Line of One Hundred and Sixth Street, west of Boulevard.
Where Knowlton brought on the Battle of Harlem Heights, and where the fighting ended, September 16th. The house stood on the high ground near the centre of the picture. One Hundred and Seventh Street on the right. -- Photo, 1890.

between the enemy's picket line below One Hundred and Sixth Street and that of the Americans at the northerly slope of Manhattanville, more than a mile above them, there was field enough for a spirited action; and on this intermediate ground—Morningside Heights—the main battle will be fought.

Jones' house stood on a low hill, now nearly all cut away, and as Knowlton's men cautiously approached under its cover, the enemy's advanced pickets caught sight of them through the trees and gave the alarm. These pickets, light infantrymen, were evidently stationed on the Bloomingdale road (Boulevard) at about One Hundred and Fourth Street, with their regiments encamped a short distance below. It took no time, we may be sure, for the troops in the van to turn out and attack the presumptuous Rangers. Two or three of their companies pushed forward and opened fire. Knowlton, although dangerously near the enemy's position, bravely stood his ground for a time. He seemed to feel that there had been running enough the day before, and called upon his men to prove their mettle. It would be something to show the Light Infantry soldiers especially that panics did not last over night. As the Rangers had been chosen to meet such situations as this, they did not disappoint their leader. A brisk skirmish took place. For half an hour or more, it must have been, the woods along the dividing line between Jones' and Hoaglandt's farms rang

with sharp firing from both sides, when Knowlton, finding that the more numerous enemy were turning his flank, ordered a retreat, which was effected without confusion or loss. One of the ranging officers himself gives us an account of the affair.¹ "On Monday morning," he writes, "the general ordered us to go and take the enemy's advanced guard; accordingly we set out just before day and found where they were; at day-brake we were discovered by the enemy, who were four hundred strong, and we were one hundred and twenty. They marched up within six rods of us, and then formed to give us battle which we were ready for; and Colonel Knowlton gave orders to fire, which we did, and stood theirs till we perceived they were getting their flank-guards around us. After giving them eight rounds apiece, the colonel gave orders for retreating, which we performed very well, without the loss of a man while retreating, though we lost about ten while in action." Adjutant-General Reed, who had ridden down quite early to our front to verify reports of the enemy's advance, tells us that he reached the Rangers just before they were attacked. "I went down to our most advanced guard," he writes, "and while I was talking with the officer, the enemy's guard fired upon us at a small distance; our men behaved well, stood and returned the fire till overpowered by numbers they were obliged to retreat."

¹ See letter No. 17, written probably by Captain Stephen Brown, who succeeded Knowlton in command of the Rangers after the action.

He adds that the British followed them up rapidly and that "I had not quitted a house five minutes before they were in possession of it." This house could have been none other than Hoaglandt's, as Vandewater's was too far to the east.

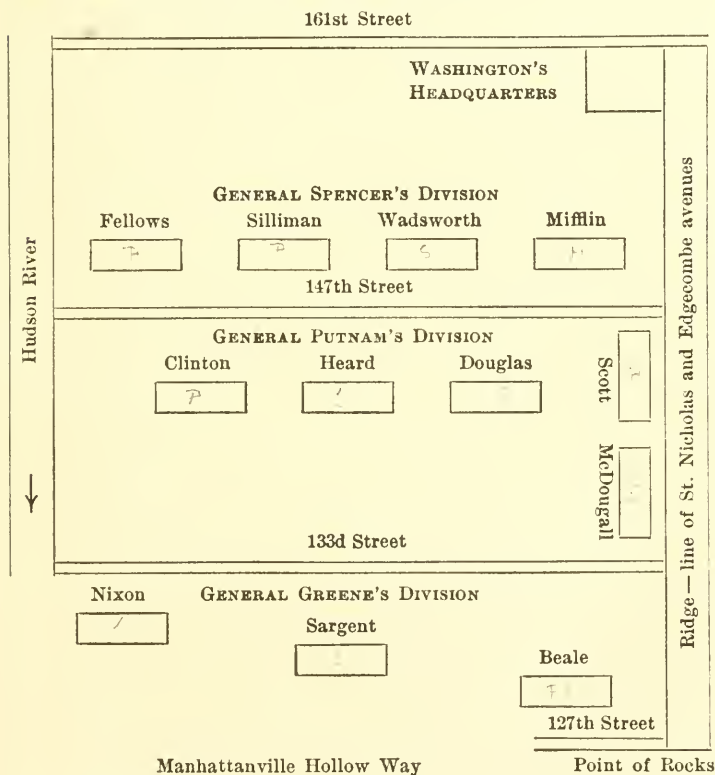
The significance of this preliminary skirmish, in its bearing upon what followed, should be emphasized. It not only led to the main fighting of the day, but also necessitated certain general movements and preparations within the American camp, which materially assist us in identifying its course. For a first effect, the skirmish put the advanced troops of both armies immediately upon the alert. We can readily tell what the enemy would do upon unexpectedly hearing that rapid firing so close to their lines. "Eight rounds apiece" — a thousand shots — from the Rangers, and as many more, no doubt, from the Light Companies, made noise enough for military ears, and presently British reënforcements appeared. It was at this time, probably, that, as Howe reports, the 2d and 3d battalions of Light Infantry, with the 42d Highlanders following, were ordered out to assist the forward companies in driving Knowlton off the ground.

Along the American front, we may be equally certain, every man was at his post. Washington himself, as already stated, had gone down from headquarters to Greene's advanced position above the Hollow Way to give directions in person. "When I arrived there," he writes, "I heard a firing, which, I

was informed, was between a party of our Rangers under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Knowlton, and an advanced party of the enemy." Greene's men all heard the firing below. It might or might not mean an attack in force, but all must be prepared for stout resistance, and in those wooded hills superior numbers could long be held in check. At the same time, or earlier, as the references indicate, Washington put his main force—Spencer's and Putnam's divisions above—in readiness for action. Most of these troops were stationed along the line of One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, where, as we have seen, the first entrenchments were thrown up across the Island. The work upon them was begun on the morning of the battle while Knowlton was skirmishing with the Light Infantry. Colonel Silliman describes what occurred there: "Yesterday at seven o'clock in the morning," he writes on the 17th, "we were alarmed with the sight of a considerable number of the enemy on the Plains below us about a mile distant. Our Brigades which form a line across the Island where I am were immediately ordered under arms, but as the enemy did not immediately advance we grounded our arms and took spades and shovels and went to work, and before night had thrown up lines across the Island. There was nothing before but three little redoubts in about a mile, and we are at work this day in strengthening them." Adjutant David Humphreys, in Silliman's brigade, adds that the troops not engaged at the front, "dur-

ing the action were throwing earth from the new trenches with an alacrity that indicated a determination to defend them." The point to observe in this connection is that our army on the forenoon of the 16th was posted in two lines across the heights¹—Greene's brigades forming one and Spencer's and Putnam's the other—and that to effect anything

¹ FORMATION OF THE AMERICAN ARMY ON HARLEM HEIGHTS, SEPTEMBER 16, 1776.—As nearly as can be determined, our army was brigaded on the heights at the time of the action about as follows. See position of the armies, map, pp. 50–51.



decisive the enemy must break through both. Neither line, however, was disturbed. What happened proved to be a surprise — an unexpected success won by a portion of our force in an unexpected way just in advance of Greene's position.

Returning to the Rangers, we find them retiring toward our front with the enemy following closely. It is clear enough that they fell back along the line of the old Bloomingdale road, as it was subsequently extended through Manhattanville to the Kingsbridge road above. An older farm lane ran along the same course, which is in part represented to-day by Claremont Avenue west of Columbia University and Barnard College. The street known as Broadway, where it crosses the Manhattanville depression east of the Boulevard, is also part of this lane. Reed, on horseback, as well as Knowlton, must have followed it in returning to the lines.

The British Light Troops had been keeping up what for the moment seemed to them a merry chase. Pushing after the Rangers through the woods and fields of Hoaglandt's farm, they halted somewhere, as we shall see, on the hill where Grant's tomb now stands, or the elevation known as "Claremont." From that point they could catch glimpses of Greene's troops on the opposite slopes, and there they must have rested for some time, as it was not until after ten o'clock that the more serious fighting of the day began. Evidently they were in high glee, and counted themselves well repaid for their morn-

ing's dash with the noble view of the Hudson stretching away before them, while the sight of frightened and flying rebels was worth the hunt. This was the third time within a month that they had scattered or driven Washington's men with ease, and it only remained on this occasion for their bugler to send the contemptuous notes of the fox-chase across the hollow into the American lines. A gallant set of soldiers they were, and during the war they rendered their king conspicuous service, which in the idle hours of camp life they celebrated in the song :

“Hark! hark! the bugle's lofty sound
Which makes the woods and rocks around
Repeat the martial strain,
Proclaims the *light-armed British troops*
Advance — Behold, rebellion droops,
She hears the sound with pain.”¹

But for once these light infantrymen were to be humbled. Upon returning from the skirmish line, Adjutant-General Reed immediately reported to Washington somewhere on the Manhattanville brow,² and urged him to reënforce the Rangers. His

¹ From Rivington's "New York Gazette," 1778.

² In his interesting sketch of this action, President Stiles places the commander-in-chief apparently at the "Point of Rocks," where a small redoubt had been thrown up, and there undoubtedly he was to be found at intervals. Washington remained at the advanced posts for at least eight hours that day, and his "station" necessarily shifted from point to point, where for the time his presence was needed. The probabilities are that, when Reed came in, he was near the line of the present Boulevard, the skirmishing below being on the river side.

own words are: "Finding how things were going, I went over to the General, to get some support for the brave fellows who had behaved so well." With equal numbers Knowlton might turn the tables on his pursuers. What stirred Reed's blood, moreover, was the blast from that Light Infantry bugler referred to, which, just at this moment, rang into his ears from the Claremont hillside. "The enemy appeared in open view," he writes, "and in the most insulting manner sounded their bugle horns as is usual after a Fox-chase. I never felt such a sensation before—it seemed to crown our disgrace." Washington, it would appear, was not immediately persuaded of the advisability of forcing any more fighting. It behooved a weakened army to keep to the defensive, and as yet it was unknown to what extent the British Light Corps was supported. To accept the challenge might bring on a general engagement which the commander-in-chief had no wish to precipitate on that day at least. But he stood ready, as in more than one notable instance during the war, to turn an opportunity to advantage, and after satisfying himself that the enemy were not in force on the opposite hill, he determined to humor their audacity with an enterprise of his own. He proposed to venture something which, if successful, would inspirit his troops—something, as he wrote to Patrick Henry, "to recover that military ardour, which is of the utmost moment to an army."

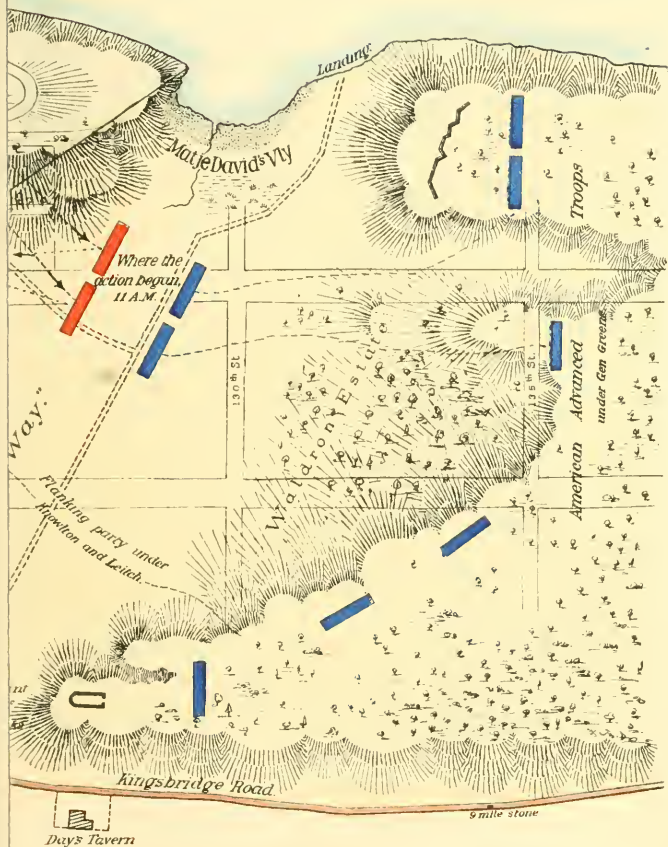
Washington, accordingly, conceived the project,

not of driving the Light Infantry back to their camp, but of entrapping them in the Hollow Way. With such strategy he was familiar, and there were men around him who would eagerly attempt to carry it out. The plan was a simple one: first, to make a feint in front of the hill and induce the enemy to advance into the hollow; and second, to send a strong detachment circuitously around their right flank to their rear and hem them in. The plan was destined to fail in part; but at the point of failure it developed into another movement which resulted in the happy event of the day.

The two parties intended to effect the manœuvre were immediately ordered out. The one to act as a feint was composed of about one hundred and fifty volunteers from Nixon's brigade of Greene's division under Lieutenant-Colonel Crary, of Hitchcock's Rhode Island Regiment. They advanced into the Hollow Way toward the enemy, who promptly accepted battle and ran down the hill to meet them. So far the plan succeeded as Washington wished. "On the appearance of our party in front," he writes, "they [the enemy] immediately ran down the hill, and took possession of some fences and bushes, and a smart firing began, but at too great a distance to do much execution on either side." An officer who was an eyewitness of this movement — Lieutenant Hodgkins, of Nixon's brigade — states that this command was posted in the edge of a thick wood (evidently at the top of the slope at about One Hundred and Thirty-

fifth Street) and that by climbing trees the soldiers could observe the enemy's movements. Crary's volunteers advanced, "which," says Hodgkins, "answered the end for which they were sent." "For our people," he proceeds, "made the attack and retreated towards us to the place where we wanted them to come, and then the enemy rushed down the hill with all speed to a plain spot of ground." The feint had worked admirably. The redcoats had been drawn into the Hollow Way, and it was only necessary to hold them to the spot until the flanking party could reach their rear. Crary's men kept up their firing and presently Nixon's entire brigade—about nine hundred effectives—was sent to their support. Whatever else might happen, the American generals had no intention of letting the Light Infantry pursue their frolic any further in this direction. Hodgkins says of this move: "Our brigade marched out of the woods, then a very hot firing began on both sides and lasted for upwards of an hour." Another officer, Captain Gooch, also of Nixon's, confirms Hodgkins with the statement that after Crary's volunteers opened the fight "a terrible fire" greeted his ears, and "orders came for the whole brigade immediately to march." Washington, already quoted, speaks of the "smart firing" at this point, but notices that it was at too long range to do much damage. Under his plan the enemy were not then to be pushed.

It is with Crary's feigned attack and the descent of the Light Infantry into the Hollow Way, that the



[See note, next page]

HEIGHTS.

[illegible]

SEPTEMBER 16, 1776

main action of the day begins. We must, accordingly, digress a moment to establish the identity of the spot. Having shown how far south the enemy were first encountered, namely, near Jones' house, it remains to indicate the northerly point at which they were forced to turn back. That point was the new position in question, and the records are decisive as to the locality. Referring to the "Plan"¹ of the battle, it will be seen that the northern projection of Morningside Heights on the river side — Claremont

¹ PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS. — The topographical features of this plan, including the present streets and the old farm lines, have been compiled from official sources. Hoaglandt's and Vandewater's farms, on which the battle was mainly fought, were surveyed in 1786 by Casimir T. Goerek, the official city surveyor, and his draught has been reproduced. Even the location of the orchard is fixed. In 1784 the "New York Packet" advertised for sale Hoaglandt's "noted farm," having on it "a valuable orchard of grafted fruit." Mr. N. De Peyster bought the farm; and in his deed the line, as measured from north to south, runs from a certain point "to the orchard, thence southwesterly across the said orchard as by a petition fence now divided [see "Plan"] to the southwest fence of the said orchard." Lib. 41, Conveyances, pp. 434-437. The deeds of Jones' farm are of record; and on the commissioners' manuscript survey of the city made in 1807, the house is located as described in these pages. Martje David's Fly is so important a landmark that a separate plan of it is given elsewhere in this work. It will be observed that the description and measurements given by Clinton are in accord with the topography of the plan, and cannot be reconciled with any other location of the battle-field than that here indicated. Modern improvements have largely levelled the rough features of Morningside Heights, but the "Plan" accurately represents the original lines and boundaries.

Hill — terminates at the bay described as “Martje David’s Fly.” This bay, subsequently known as “Harlem Cove,” has disappeared under the process of filling in and the building of docks and ferry slips. The older Dutch name, the “Fly” or “Vly,” properly described the salt meadow which skirted the cove between high and low water mark. It was also known as the “Round Meadow” in much the same sense that a similar meadow on Sherman’s Creek above Fort George was called “salt” or “round.” The Fly set inland into a swampy lot reaching nearly to the Boulevard on the line of One Hundred and Thirtieth Street, which accounted for the bend in the lane running through the Hollow Way to the “Landing.” The topography of Claremont remains unchanged either in its pointed slope down to the river terminating at the Fly at One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Street, or in its more irregular and abrupt descent at the base just below the same street nearer the Boulevard.

In his accounts of the action, General George Clinton, an eye-witness and participator, makes “Martje David’s Fly” an important landmark. His reference to it, with confirmatory testimony, is especially valuable for our purposes, as he had been a member of the commission to survey the line of Harlem Commons in 1774 and was familiar with the surroundings. The line began, according to the commission’s report, “on a certain point on the east side of Hudson’s River on the south side of the bay, lying before a

certain piece of meadow commonly known by the name of the Round Meadow or Mutje David's Fly." Clinton writes from accurate knowledge, and his two letters tracing the progress of the engagement are to be followed closely. In that of September 18th, to the New York Convention, he says: "On Monday morning, about ten o'clock, a party of the enemy, consisting of Highlanders, Hessians, the Light Infantry, Grenadiers, and English Troops (Number uncertain) attack'd our advanc'd party, commanded by Coll. Knowlton at Martje Davit's Fly.¹ They were opposed with spirit, and soon made to retreat to a clear Field, southwest of that about 200 paces." Again to Dr. Tappen he writes on the 21st: "On Monday Morning the Enemy attacked our Advanced Party Commanded by Colo. Knowlton (a brave officer who was killed in the Action) near the Point of Matje Davit's Fly — the Fire was very brisk on both sides — our People, however, soon drove them back into a clear field, about 200 Paces South East [west] of that." These references, "*at* Matje Davit's Fly" and "*near the point* of Matje Davit's Fly," are sufficiently precise. Clinton clearly would have us understand that the attack occurred near the river, close to a well-known locality. The "*point*" referred to may be either the easterly edge of the meadow at

¹ Knowlton, as we have seen, was not attacked by the enemy for the first time at the Fly, but at Jones'. The attack, however, was kept up to the Fly or vicinity. The point of the reference is, that the enemy advanced no further than the Fly. "Our people," says Clinton, "soon drove them back" to a field southwest of that.

the bend of the lane, as shown on the "Plan," or more probably it was the point of land, Claremont, sloping to the meadow. Washington and the other eye-witnesses describe the enemy as running down a hill, and Clinton, referring to the same movement, puts them at and near the Fly. There is no other hill there to satisfy the conditions but Claremont, so that the new position of the Light Infantry is established with approximate accuracy. We must place them in the Hollow Way in the immediate vicinity of the Boulevard and One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Street. That is "at" and "near" the Fly. There where the first cluster of houses stood in old Manhattanville we have the scene of the beginning of the main action of Harlem Heights.¹

With these points in the topography determined, we can follow the progress of the battle more intelligently, and especially the course of the flanking party, of which much was expected. This detachment, about two hundred strong, was composed of Knowlton's Rangers, now back at the lines, reënforced with three companies of riflemen from

¹ The recollections of Colonel Henry Rutgers, an old New Yorker, present in the American camp on the 16th, are important. After the loss of the city, he says (No. 36): "A division of the British army, taking the *Bloomingdale road*, arrived at *Manhattanville*," where fighting occurred. As Claremont Hill has both a northerly and easterly slope, it is difficult to determine where the enemy "ran down"; but probably on the eastern side, as they would then have the lane behind them and a gentler ascent in their rear, should they be driven back. There is no ground east of the Boulevard that can be called a hill "near" the Fly.

Weedon's Third Virginia Regiment under the command of Major Andrew Leitch.¹ Weedon's battalion had arrived in camp only a few days before, and during the forenoon it had been posted prominently at the front. Recruited largely from the vicinity of Fredericksburg, — Weedon and Leitch both came from that place, — Washington was acquainted with many of the officers and men and felt that under the pride of old and new associations they would give a good account of themselves. On its rolls are the names of Captain William Washington and Lieutenant James Monroe, who were distinguished on later fields. Monroe is said to have been in this affair of Harlem Heights. With these fine bodies of men — Rangers and Riflemen — Knowlton and Leitch set out to execute the flank movement. Crossing the valley, necessarily some distance east of the point where Crary was engaging the enemy, they appear to have aimed for the ledge of rocks near One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Street and the Boulevard on which Fort Laight was erected during the war of 1812. Could they reach it unobserved, the Light Infantry would be surrounded. But unfortunately, through no mistake of theirs, the attempt failed of complete success. Washington reports that "unluckily they began their attack too soon, as it

¹ The three companies were commanded by Captains West, Thornton, and Ashby. For the part taken by Weedon's men, see the extract from a letter of one of his officers, given in the chapter on "Previous Versions of the Battle" in connection with the site.

was rather in flank than in rear." Colonel Reed, who went with them, claims that one of the regiments in the "feint" made a movement by which Leitch, who led the flankers, was diverted from the proposed course. Some subordinate officer, misleading the party, took them "out of the road I intended," adds Reed. There was some "misapprehension," Washington again writes, and the Light Infantry were not hemmed in. The mistake may have been due in part to the enemy's movements. At Manhattanville the British had stood their ground for nearly an hour, exchanging a brisk fire with Crary and Nixon — when, as Clinton reports, they were forced "to retreat to a clear field southwest of that about two hundred paces, where they lodged themselves behind a fence covered with bushes. Our people attacked them in turn, and caused them to retreat a second time, leaving five dead on the spot." It is possible that the Light Troops, feeling the pressure of the feint, fell back to the fence in question (near Fort Laight), just as Leitch and Knowlton were coming around to the same point, in which case they would be taken in flank and not in rear.

The "fence" overgrown with bushes was probably that which marked the northern boundary of Hoaglandt's farm as shown on the "Plan." It stood on the division line between the New York and Harlem Commons, and crossed the Boulevard at about One Hundred and Twenty-fourth Street. Hardly had the enemy taken cover there when Knowlton's men

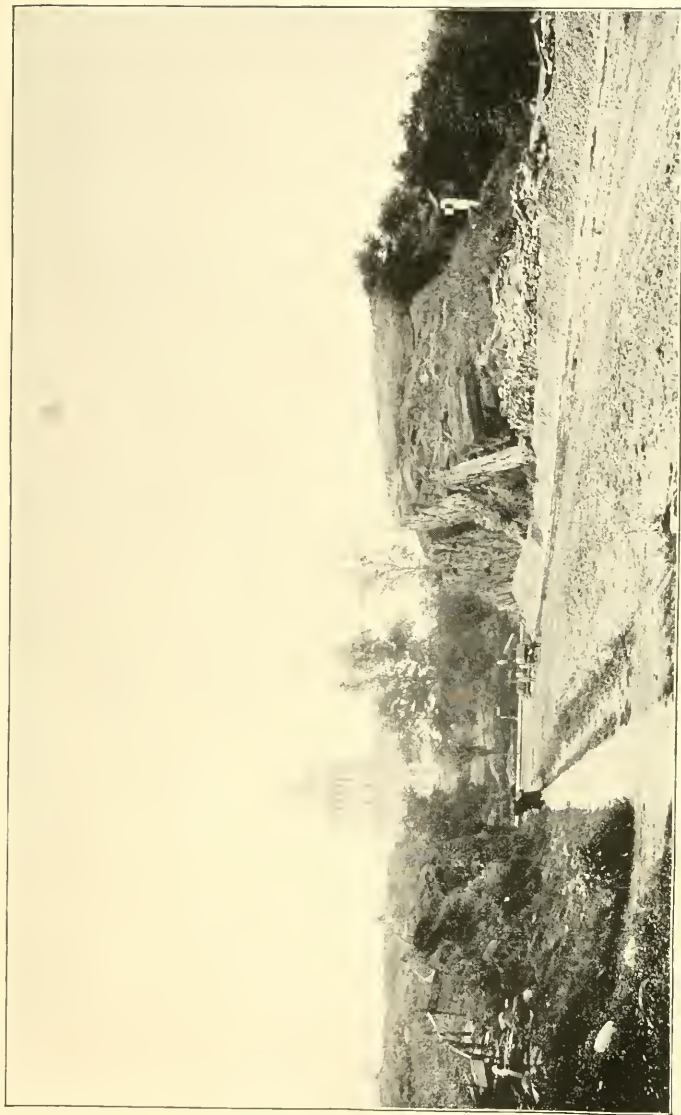
struck their flank and at once joined in the fight. That the parties encountered each other at the point indicated seems to be made clear by Reed's description and Clinton's references. "In a few minutes," says the former, "our brave fellows mounted up the rocks and attacked them—then they ran in turn"; and again, "We went up, both men and officers, with great spirit." Sergeant Burnham of the Rangers remembered that in passing over they fell in with the enemy's right flank "posted out of sight on lower ground," and that the Infantry fired upon them as they reached "the top of the height." Such definite landmarks and guides as the rocks, the fence, the Fly, the distances by paces, the top of the height, the hill behind the enemy, and the general course of the fighting make it difficult to place the scene of Knowlton's attack at any other point on Morningside Heights. We must associate it with the vicinity of old Fort Laight.¹

The proximate identification of this spot is of special interest because here fell the two brave leaders of the flanking detachment. Leitch, in advance, received three wounds within a few minutes and was carried off the field. "He conducted himself on this

¹ This fort was a small redoubt erected in October, 1814, by the 85th Regiment New York State Militia, and named after their colonel, Edward W. Laight, of this city. It stood on the rocky point, a short distance east of the Boulevard, about halfway between One Hundred and Twenty-third and Twenty-fourth streets. The former street has been cut through the ledge. See photograph of the site on another page.

occasion," says Colonel Griffith, "in a manner that does him the greatest honor, and so did all his party."¹ Almost immediately after, Colonel Knowlton also fell mortally wounded. Mounting the ledges at the head of his men, with characteristic courage he exposed himself to the enemy and received their fire. Some of his men fell with him. The hero of Bunker Hill accepted his fate with a fortitude and devotion that impressed his comrades. Reed tells us that "when gasping in the agonies of death all his inquiry was if we had drove the enemy." Captain Brown, of the Rangers, wrote with evident feeling: "My poor Colonel, in the second attack, was shot just by my side—the ball entered the small of his back. I took hold of him, asked him if he was badly wounded? he told me he was; but, he says, 'I do not value my Life if we do but get the day.' I then ordered two men to carry him off. He desired me by all means to keep up this flank. He seemed as unconcerned and calm as though nothing had happened to him." The trusty soldier lived but an hour and was buried on the following day with all the honors of war. His loss was felt throughout the army. In his orders of the 17th, Washington fittingly referred to him as "the gallant and brave Colonel Knowlton who would have been an honor to any Country." Major Leitch, whose wounds had not been regarded as dangerous, died on October 1st. His name appeared as the pa-

¹ Colonel Griffith's letter, No. 29, gives some particulars of Leitch's fall and the nature of his wounds.



SITE OF KNOWLTON'S FLANK ATTACK.

Rocky elevation where Fort Laight stood in 1814, north of One Hundred and Twenty-third street, east of the Boulevard. Photo, 1897.

role for the day after the battle, and that the memory of the leader of the Rangers was kept green in camp is suggested by the record in an old orderly book in the Library of Congress, in which the parole announced for March 18, 1778, at Valley Forge, is "KNOLTON."¹

Notwithstanding the loss of their leaders, the Rangers and Riflemen pressed on, and in Washington's words, "continued the engagement with the greatest resolution." The feint also developed into an attack, and the Light Troops were driven from

¹ BURIAL PLACE OF KNOWLTON AND LEITCH. — Where these officers were buried is a matter of conjecture. The spot was probably on or in the immediate vicinity of old Breakneck Hill, on the line of St. Nicholas Avenue, running up to One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street. Heath tells us that Major Henly was buried by Knowlton's side, and the orders of September 24th state that the former was to be buried from his brother's quarters "below the hill where the redoubt is thrown up on the road." This was Breakneck Hill. The burial place could not have been far away. Lossing and others state that both Knowlton and Leitch were buried in a redoubt on the site of the present Trinity Cemetery, West One Hundred and Fifty-fourth Street. But that redoubt had not been constructed at that date. The place was wooded and at a distance from the main road. There were no associations connected with it that would lead to its selection as the burial place of prominent officers. Dr. Woodward, Knowlton's biographer, knew many of the colonel's comrades, and gathered material for his Memoir in part from them. He states that Knowlton "was buried with military honors near the road leading from Kingsbridge to the city." This is probably correct. The spot might be marked at any point on St. Nicholas Avenue between One Hundred and Thirty-fifth and One Hundred and Forty-fifth streets.

the fence. Clinton states that we brought two pieces of artillery to bear upon them at this point "which fairly put them to flight with two discharges." So a second time they gave way; and with the aid of Clinton's and Reed's four circumstantial letters we can follow them from field to field. From the fence they must needs retreat up the hill — not up its Claremont slope down which they may have run, but straight back toward camp along the line of the Boulevard and the Bloomingdale lane. As Clinton says, "The second time, our people pursued them closely to the top of a hill. . . . We pursued them to a buckwheat field on the top of a high hill, distance about four hundred paces, where they received a considerable reënforcement, with several field-pieces, and there made a stand. A very brisk action ensued at this place which continued about two hours. Our people at length worsted them a third time." This is spirited and definite, and confirmed by others. Lieutenant Hodgkins, already quoted, goes on to say with Clinton: "Then the enemy retreated up the hill and our people followed them and fought them near an hour longer." Colonel Tilghman adds that our men rushed on and "drove the enemy from the wood into a buckwheat field."

The location of this hilltop and field which mark the third stage in the pursuit of the enemy, and the site of the principal fighting, can readily be fixed within general limits. The "hilltop" was the high ground extending from Columbia University around

westwardly and northerly to Grant's tomb and Claremont. In falling back, the enemy, as stated, would presumably occupy the southern brow, covering the Bloomingdale lane and the retreat to Jones'. This would take them to about the line of One Hundred and Twentieth Street between the Boulevard and Riverside Drive. Somewhere there the buckwheat field would be found, five or six hundred paces from the fence. In that vicinity, on and northwest of the grounds of Columbia University and Barnard College, occurred the main battle of Harlem Heights.¹

¹ TRADITIONS AND RELICS OF THE BATTLE-FIELD. — The recollections of some old people, preserved by the late Mr. Moore, librarian of Lenox Library, before any accounts of Harlem Heights had been written, are of interest. See in "Authorities," No. 37, where Mrs. McGowan, who lived in the vicinity, states that the action occurred on the hill "near the Bloomingdale Asylum" (present Columbia grounds). Another puts the spot where Knowlton fell between the asylum and Manhattanville, bearing out the references in the text. In Mr. Benedict's pamphlet, to be noticed later, a letter appears, on p. 51, from a Mr. Humphrey Jones, who says: "My father at one time lived at Manhattanville, and he has shown me the battle-ground. It commenced on the hill near the Asylum." Mr. Kelby of the Historical Society informs the writer that a son of John Pessenger, a butcher in the Revolutionary army, who attended Leitch during his illness, used to point out the large field immediately west of Columbia as the place where his father told him the enemy's dead were buried. On one occasion Mr. Kelby accompanied Pessenger, who identified the spot. Recollections are to be accepted cautiously, but in this case they are all supported by the contemporary documents.

Few relics from Revolutionary battle-fields have been preserved. On Manhattan Island they have been picked up mainly on Washington Heights, and represent the fighting at the

From every account it was a gallant action. In this new position the fighting grew into a pitched battle, lasting from noon until about two o'clock. Washington had limited the morning's movement to an attempt to capture the British Light Troops; but finding, on its failure, that his men were showing fine spirit and dash in advancing through the woods and up the hill, he commended their example by sending in supports and permitting them to engage in a direct attack. Among others, he ordered out several companies of the Maryland "Flying Camp" or state troops from General Beale's brigade, — three under Major Price, three under Major Mantz of Griffith's regiment, and three under Major Eden of Ewing's,¹ with some from Richardson's; also Colonel Sargent's brigade from Greene's command — Nixon's brigade from the same division being already in the field; Colonel Douglas' regiment, one of those swept up in the Kip's Bay panic of the day before; and the remainder of Weedon's battalion. Nearly eighteen hundred men were soon engaged on our side at the buckwheat field on the hilltop. To direct and capture of Fort Washington, Nov. 16, 1776. Three-pound cannon-balls, the only size fired by the British on September 16, picked up many years ago on the field of the Harlem action at One Hundred and Twenty-first Street, near Claremont Avenue, are in the writer's possession.

¹ Wednesday, Oct. 30, 1776, died Major James Eden of Colonel Ewing's Maryland Flying Camp, and was buried from Stronbergh Church, East New Jersey. His bravery was "displayed in an especial manner on York Island in the engagement of the 16th of September." — *Philadelphia Paper*, 1776.

encourage them by example, Generals Putnam, Greene, and George Clinton, Colonel Reed, and other members of Washington's staff joined in the battle. Our line must have extended from the northern part of the Columbia grounds westerly to Claremont Avenue or beyond, and from the direction the troops took as they went into the field it is probable that Greene's brigades — Nixon's and Sargent's — formed the right and that the Rangers, Riflemen, Flying Camp, and others formed the left. The main body of the commands represented New England, Maryland, and Virginia, with volunteers from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

The enemy, also, were reënforced. Brigadier-General Leslie brought up the 2d and 3d Light Infantry battalions and the 42d Highlanders, while the increased firing soon prompted the British General to support him with Cornwallis' Reserves,¹ including the Grenadiers, the 33d, two field-pieces, a battalion of Hessian Grenadiers, and a company of Hessian Yagers or riflemen. Captain Harris of the Grenadiers remembers that they were "trotted about three miles without a halt to draw breath." The field-pieces and the Yagers alone reached the

¹ The command known as the "Reserve" in the British army was composed of the four battalions of Grenadiers and the 33d and 42d regiments. It was a "Reserve," not to the army at large, but to the van composed of the three Light Infantry battalions. Its place was in the advance, and in this campaign it was commanded by Earl Cornwallis. See the plan of the "Position of the Two Armies, Sept. 16-Oct. 12, near Harlem," where the encampment of this corps is indicated with substantial accuracy.

hill in time to engage, and but for Montresor's exertions, if we read his statement correctly, the guns would not have been there. At McGowan's Pass he found Lieutenant Wallace with two three-pounders, but no horses, so he had them "hauled by hand" to the front, where they did good execution firing sixty rounds apiece.¹ As for the Yagers, they swarmed forward, says Von Elking, and "soon came into a hot contest on Hoyland's hill."² Although numerically somewhat inferior to our forces, the corps engaged were among the choicest in Howe's army.

The enemy stoutly and proudly held their position, but appear to have made no attempt to drive us from the field at the point of the bayonet. The sharp fire of the Rangers and Riflemen and the determined courage which all the American troops displayed put them on the defensive. Many of our officers, writing as eye-witnesses, applaud the fine behavior of their men. Nixon's brigade included

¹ As stated in a previous note, three-pound cannon-balls have been found on the battle-ground, One Hundred and Twenty-first Street and Claremont Avenue. Whether the Americans brought artillery into the field is uncertain. Clinton states that two pieces were used in the beginning of the fight in the Hollow Way, but it may be doubted whether they were dragged up the hill to the buckwheat field. Some accounts state that Captain Oliver Brown, of the American Artillery, fought two guns throughout the action.

² The hill on which the action occurred stood partly in "Hoyland's" [Hoaglandt's] farm and partly in Vandewater's. The enemy's reënforcements doubtless came up by the Bloomingdale road and lane which there ran through Hoaglandt's grounds. This reference assists us in locating the field.

Greene's two favorite Rhode Island regiments, under Colonels Varnum and Hitchcock, and their "exceedingly spirited" conduct greatly pleased the general. Maryland captains speak of the cheerfulness and alacrity with which their companies went into action. Leitch's Virginians, we are told, did themselves the greatest honor. Knowlton's Rangers, now fighting over the ground for the second time this morning, no doubt fought the harder to avenge their leader's fall. Local pride prompted Tilghman to write that the Southern men bore off "the palm"; while Gooch, the Massachusetts captain, thought the New Englanders gained "the first Lawrells." Could these officers have surveyed the field together, they would have had none but the warmest praise for all. Generals and staff-officers were equally conspicuous. Putnam, Clinton, Reed, and Greene distinguished themselves by their personal exertions and bravery, and contributed much to the victory. In his enthusiasm over the result, the latter wrote that, under discipline and good leadership, the American soldier could "bid defiance to the whole world."

For nearly two hours the "hot contest" was kept up on the hilltop and around the buckwheat field, when the enemy again retreated. A Hessian writer represents that the Yagers and Highlanders had "fired their last shot." The Americans followed in close pursuit, and the day was won. As Clinton reports, "Our people at length worsted them a third time, caused them to fall back into an orchard,

from thence across a hollow and up another hill not far distant from their own lines." This would take them to the vicinity of Jones' house, where Knowlton first found them in the early morning. The orchard through which they passed, and where, according to one account, they vainly attempted to rally, stood just west of the Boulevard and north of One Hundred and Eleventh Street.¹ Near Jones' the pursuit ended. The British "Reserve," with Cornwallis doubtless at its head, was coming up and Linsingen's Hessian Grenadiers had just appeared. Tilghman, who had been sent down to recall our men, writes that they "gave a Hurra! and left the field in good order"; while Reed reports that they were recalled with difficulty, so new to them was the experience of putting the British soldier to flight. Washington sums up the day's work succinctly: "Our troops charged the enemy with great intrepidity, and drove them from the wood into the plain, and were pushing them from thence, having silenced their fire in a great measure, when I judged it prudent to order a retreat, fearing the enemy, as I have since found was really the case, were sending a large body to support their party." Late in the afternoon, the troops returned to camp, rejoicing in a success they had not anticipated, and conscious of having won it at the moment it was most needed, and in a way that would give it the

¹ See "Plan" and reference to the orchard in description of the field, p. 71.

most effect. It was for them the welcome victory of Harlem Heights.¹

The casualties of the day were as large, proportionately, as the combatants suffered in most of the battles of the Revolution. In the number of killed the Americans lost more, and in the number of wounded, less than the enemy. Kemble reports a total British loss of one hundred and seventy-one, or, in detail, one sergeant and thirteen privates killed, and two majors, two captains, seven subalterns, five sergeants, three drummers, and one hundred and thirty-eight privates wounded. Two or more of the wounded officers soon died. Of the Hessian Yagers one lieutenant and seven men were wounded. No detailed statement of the American loss can be found, but from some fragmentary returns (No. 40) and letters of officers, it may be closely estimated. Their killed numbered about thirty, and the wounded and missing not over one hundred. Among the officers, besides Knowlton and Leitch, Captain Gleason, of Nixon's Massachusetts, and Lieutenant Noel Allen, of Varnum's Rhode Island Regiment, were both

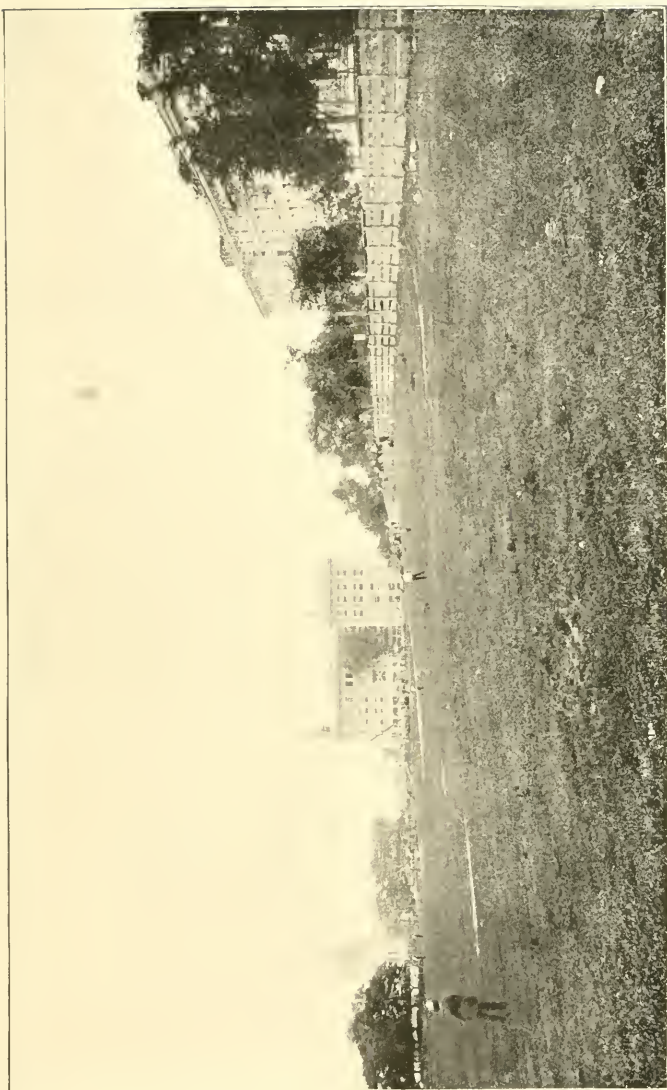
¹ To his army, Washington issued the following congratulatory order on the 17th:

"The General most heartily thanks the troops commanded yesterday by Major Leitch, who first advanced on the enemy, and the others who so resolutely supported them—the behaviour yesterday is such a contrast to that of some troops the day before, as must show what may be done where officers and soldiers will exert themselves. Once more, therefore, the General calls upon officers and men to act up to the noble cause in which they are engaged and support the honour and liberties of their country." No. 22 in the "Authorities."

killed. Greene's troops on the right suffered more than the others—one of the commanding officers placing the casualties among them at seventy-five. By way of comparison it may be stated that the American force at Harlem Heights was but slightly inferior to that engaged at Bennington, and larger than the force at Stony Point, King's Mountain, or Cowpens, while its losses were greater than in any of these actions.¹

That the British would claim "Harlem Heights" as a victory for themselves was to be expected. The final withdrawal of our troops from the field after the pursuit, they construed into a retreat. Howe reported that "the light infantry and 42d regiment,

¹ AMERICAN CASUALTIES AT HARLEM HEIGHTS. — Killed in Nixon's brigade: Varnum's Rhode Island, 3; Hitchcock's Rhode Island, 5; Bailey's Massachusetts, 2; Nixon's Massachusetts, 3; Little's Massachusetts, none. In other commands: Sargent's Massachusetts, 1; Douglas' Connecticut, 2; Weedon's Virginia, including Leitch's companies, 3; the Rangers, including loss in first skirmish, probably 12 or more. The Maryland companies seem to have had very few, if any, killed (No. 18 in "Authorities"). As to the wounded, Lieutenant Hodgkins, of Little's Massachusetts, reports 20, with none killed in his regiment; Weedon's, 12; Marylanders, Captain Low and 12 privates; wounded and missing, as reported in a few regiments, 15. Estimating the wounded not reported in several regiments of Nixon's and Sargent's brigades at 40 or 50, and the total reaches 100. — Speaking of the enemy's losses, Washington wrote to Governor Cooke, of Rhode Island, September 17th: "From the appearance of blood in every place where they made their stand and on the fences as they passed, we have reason to believe that they had a good many killed and wounded, though they did not leave many on the ground."



FIELD WHERE THE PRINCIPAL ACTION WAS FOUGHT.

General view looking north from One Hundred and Sixteenth Street west of the Boulevard. Barnard College in centre near the "Buckwheat Field"; Columbia University on the right; Bloomingdale road on the left along the line of trees, with Grant's tomb in the background. - Photo, 1897.

with the assistance of the chasseurs [Yagers] and field-pieces, repulsed the enemy with considerable loss, and obliged them to retire within their works." He failed to mention that his own troops had first been driven a mile to their own lines. In his orders of the next day he entertains the highest opinion of the corps which beat back "a very superior body of the rebels," but he has cold praise for the Light Companies for pursuing Knowlton in the morning "without proper discretion" or support. Donop, commanding the Hessian Light Troops in the army, modestly reported: "But for my Yagers, two regiments of Highlanders and the British Infantry would have all, perhaps, been captured." This important service seems not to have been appreciated by the British commander-in-chief, as he made no allusion to the Yagers in his report of the 17th. They came in for supplementary thanks a day or two later. The opinion of the best-informed among the enemy, in regard to the action, was probably reflected by Sir Henry Clinton in his criticism of Stedman's published account. "The ungovernable impetuosity of the light troops," he wrote upon the margin of the page, "drew us into this scrape."¹ Clinton was on the ground, his own command was engaged, and as a trained and observant soldier he well understood that it could not be credited with a victory.

¹ Jay Pamphlet, pp. 32, 81. This comment appears in Clinton's copy of the history of the war by the British Commissary Stedman, which is now in possession of the James Carter Brown Library, Providence, Rhode Island.

To appreciate the significance and moral effect of this action, one has but to glance through the letters of the day written from the American camp. A most timely and well-delivered return stroke, it revived the energies of our army, and had its influence in compelling another delay in the enemy's movements. Clinton, not given to a show of enthusiasm, wrote that it had animated our soldiers, filled them with new spirit, erased every bad impression the retreat from Long Island had left on their minds, and that they thought of "nothing now but conquest." "A most signal victory to us, and the defeat a considerable mortification to them," wrote Major Lewis Morris. If we "stick to these mighty men they will run as fast as other people," is Knox's comment. "It seems to have greatly inspirited the whole of our troops," and must result in "many salutary consequences," was the assuring message from the commander-in-chief to the president of Congress. Not the least of these consequences was the revival of interest in the plan of reorganizing the army on a permanent basis for future campaigns. Committees from Congress and State assemblies visited this encampment, consulted with the generals, and prepared lists of meritorious officers who deserved appointment in the proposed regiments of the Continental line. The requirements of the military situation were newly impressed upon all. Nor was it a secondary consequence that the victory came to cheer the heart and confirm the faith of Washington

himself at a time when the cares and anxieties of his position bore heavily upon him. With inexperienced officers in every department, he had shouldered the burdens of the campaign by personally attending even to its minutest details. Keenly mortified at the recent defeats and retreats, he greatly stood in need of this exhibition of self-reliance and reserve power on the part of his troops; and to his army Washington, as a leader, was all in all. We can do no less than accept his own expressive estimate of the value of this victory, for it seems to contain a meaning which the sense of profound relief alone can convey. Some pronounced success that would be immediately "inspiring" and "salutary" was what the crisis called upon the American soldier to win; and it was handsomely won at Harlem Heights.

V

SUBSEQUENT EVENTS — THE RANGERS AND FORT WASHINGTON — TRENTON AND PRINCETON

A FEW facts of local interest may be added to the narrative, and some continuity observed in rounding out Harlem Heights with a reference to Trenton and Princeton.

Fearing a counter-stroke from the enemy after the action, Washington detailed large outpost detachments every night, on the slopes overlooking the Hollow Way. On the night of the 16th, especially, his precautions were strict and minute. His orders directed General Putnam to command on the right flank along the Hollow Way, while General Spencer was to guard the ridge as far up as headquarters. "Should the enemy attempt to force the pass to-night, General Putnam is to apply to General Spencer for a reënforcement." Also, "General Nixon's and Colonel Sargent's divisions, Colonel Weedon's and Major Price's regiments, are to retire to their quarters and refresh themselves; but to hold themselves in readiness to turn out at a minute's warning." This direction is of interest as definitely indicating what troops had borne the brunt of the day's fighting. They were to retire and refresh themselves. Nixon's and Weedon's men, in fact,

had had no rest the night before the engagement. The picket guards were to consist of eight hundred rank and file, officered with two colonels, two lieutenant-colonels, two majors and captains, and subalterns in proportion. Soon after the battle General Greene was placed in command of Fort Lee, opposite Fort Washington, and Nixon's brigade was transferred to the same point.

The main force, meantime, strengthened the line of works across the island, referred to on page 49, which appears to have been our principal reliance for about two weeks. By the orders of September 26th, Putnam was to command the troops in front of the line, and Spencer those in the rear. The "grand parade" ground of the army was established in the fields near Spencer's headquarters at "Mr. Kortright's" (to be more particularly mentioned in the next chapter), or on the general line of One Hundred and Forty-eighth Street, a little east of Amsterdam Avenue. Court-martials were held at "the White House near Head Quarters," which was probably the house marked on old surveys as standing on the present St. Nicholas Avenue at One Hundred and Sixtieth Street. Upon the approach of the enemy, alarm guns were to be fired from "the redoubts on the road by Colonel Moylan's." This officer was then quartermaster-general of the army, and his quarters were at a house on the late Bradhurst estate near the top of old "Breakneck Hill," St. Nicholas Avenue near One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street. The

redoubts stood on the crest of the hill forming the left of our main line, and there it is believed that young Captain Alexander Hamilton was stationed with his company of artillery. His well-known estate on Washington Heights, which he purchased after the war, lay just below this point. The most conspicuous mansion on the heights, now the only remaining specimen of Colonial architecture in New York, was the property of Colonel Roger Morris, a retired officer of the British army.¹ This, as we well know, was Washington's headquarters from the evening of September 15th until October 20th, when the army retired to White Plains. In his letter of September 24th (No. 53), Captain Hutcheson makes some interesting references to the general's city quarters; and in the same letter he gives a brief description of the great fire which swept New York on the night of September 21st.

The enemy made no demonstrations after the 16th for nearly four weeks, the interval being occupied in completing the Jones-McGowan line of forts and entrenchments. They keep "very shy," writes General McDougall. Indeed, they do not appear to have made any effort to confine us closely to our own lines, as the Rangers and other parties foraged and scouted over Harlem Plains without opposition. Colonel Tilghman, Washington's confidential aid, describes one of these expeditions.

¹ See article on the "Roger Morris House" in the "Magazine of American History" for February, 1881.

"Yesterday morning," he writes, October 3d, "we had occasion to bring off a parcel of hay and grain from Harlem; to effect this with safety a covering party of one thousand men were ordered under arms. As the enemy could plainly discover our men marching towards their right flank [that is, down Harlem Lane to McGowan's Pass] I believe they imagined an attack was intended upon their lines. They immediately beat to arms, struck their tents, and manned their lines. Upon perceiving our real intentions they let us alone, set down again, and let us bring off the grain." On the 7th, he adds: "The two armies are as quiet as if they were a thousand miles apart."¹ A week later Howe resumed operations. Convinced that Washington could not be assailed in his new position without great loss of life, he again resorted to the flanking process, and on October 12th, leaving Percy with two brigades to defend New York, he broke camp and began his movement into Westchester County. Proceeding through Hell Gate to Throg's Neck, on Long Island Sound, he threatened the American left and rear.

Compelled by Howe's operations to fall back from Harlem Heights, Washington, by the 26th, had occupied and fortified White Plains, and there awaited the enemy's attack. The battle took place on the 28th, without discredit to the American arms. The losses were about equal; but as our forces

¹ "Memoir of Lieutenant-Colonel Tench Tilghman," pp. 142, 143. Compare with letter, No. 25, in "Authorities."

withdrew from the field, the British claimed the victory.

Trusting too confidently in the natural strength of Fort Washington above the Harlem Heights encampment, a council of war voted to retain it after the Island had been abandoned. With Fort Lee on the Jersey side, it was expected to close the navigation of the Hudson to the English ships, although three of them had previously sailed through the barriers. Colonel Robert Magaw, of Pennsylvania, was placed in command. On the 16th of November, however, the enemy, returning from White Plains, attacked the fort from four directions, and the garrison of over twenty-five hundred men surrendered. This was the heaviest loss, though not the severest blow, of the campaign, the responsibility for which was shared alike by General Greene and the commander-in-chief.

Among the detachments captured was the corps of Rangers which had made a name for itself in the action of Harlem Heights. Washington intended to have it follow the main army, but Colonel Magaw petitioned that it might remain with him. Representing the Rangers as being the only security to his lines beyond the fort, and that he must contract his cordon of guards if they were taken from him, the colonel was permitted to keep them. On the day of the attack they were stationed on familiar ground in the Hollow Way and around the point of Rocks, and when Percy's troops, forming

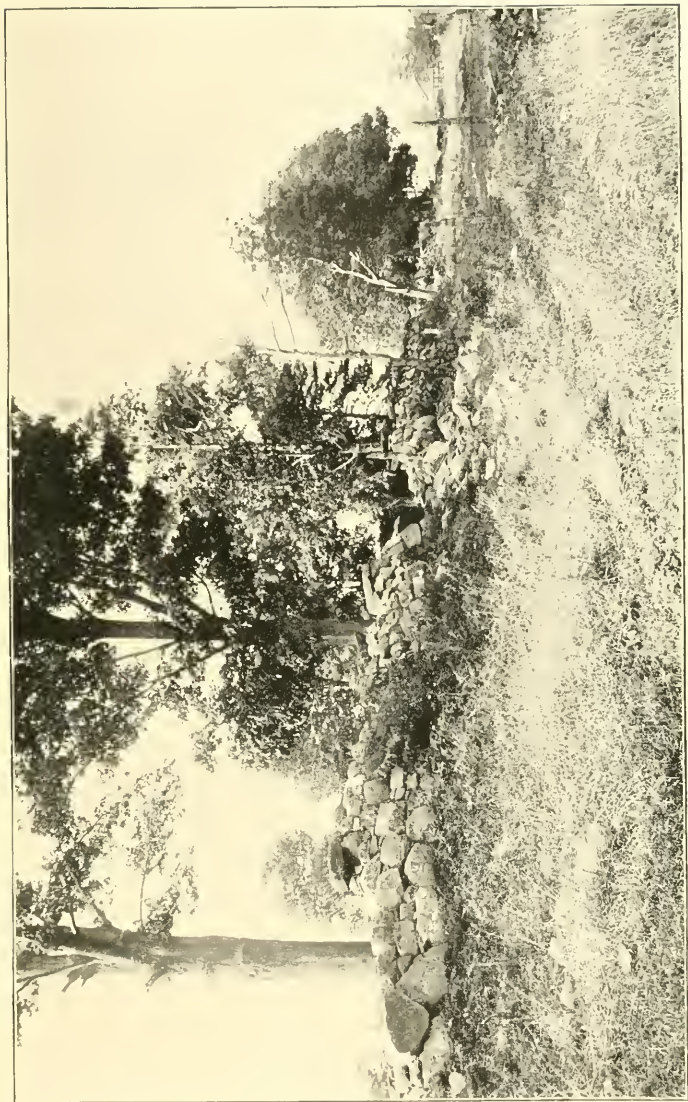
one of the enemy's columns, advanced from Jones' and McGowan's, they were forced back to the fort, which surrendered as they reached it. A singular fatality seemed to accompany this brave little body. Its first leader, Knowlton, was mortally wounded at Harlem Heights. Captain Brown, who succeeded him for a short time, was killed at the defence of Mud Island, near Philadelphia, in 1777. The third leader, Major Colburn, of New Hampshire, who was wounded in a skirmish in which the Rangers engaged late in October, fell fighting at the head of his regiment in the second Battle of Saratoga. The fourth was Captain Lemuel Holmes, who was to remain a prisoner in the enemy's hands for two years. Captain Nathan Hale, who by virtue of his rank would have had the command after Colburn, had been executed as a spy. That many of the men died in the prisons in New York or returned home with shattered constitutions can be inferred from the fragmentary journal of Lieutenant Babcock,¹ who himself succumbed to disease contracted while caring for his unfortunate comrades. The Rangers began and ended their service on Harlem Heights.

From Fort Washington to Trenton and Princeton, or the close of the campaign, was another interval of six or eight weeks. As these weeks elapsed Washington's army dwindled to the merest shadow of a force. But knowing what resolute men could

¹ No. 42, among the "Authorities," now printed for the first time. It throws some light on prison experience during the Revolution.

do at a favorable moment, he twice turned upon the enemy and gladdened the country with victories brilliantly and most opportunely won. Princeton, the closing success, may be associated in a way with Harlem Heights. In the former we find the American soldiers exhibiting a discipline and effectiveness to be gained and developed only through the experience of such affairs as the latter. It was Nixon's brigade, Greene's old command,—the same that fought so well on Morningside Heights,—which, at a critical point in the action, advanced upon the enemy at Princeton, and helped to turn the day decisively in our favor. The movements were similar,—in each case a fearless attack upon the regulars in the open field.

The men of the time, as we must believe not only from their own animated descriptions but from the nature of the action itself, would have accorded the Battle of Harlem Heights a prominent place among the events of 1776. Far from being an isolated incident of the campaign, it establishes a closer relation of events. Unexpectedly rousing a despondent army, and reassuring it of its vitality and possibilities, it could have left none other than a permanent impression. The typical soldier of that field fought on. He was the patriot of the Revolution. Locally we lose sight of him only on Evacuation Day, November 25, 1783, when New York was in his hands once more.



ON THE OLD BLOOMINGDALE ROAD.

Part of the battle-field, looking north from One Hundred and Seventeenth Street, between Claremont Avenue and Riverside Drive. — Photo 1897

PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THE BATTLE

WITH

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES TO THE
LOCATION OF THE FIELD

PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF THE BATTLE—ADDITIONAL REFERENCES TO THE SITE

WHILE our earlier historical writers and biographers, such as Gordon and Marshall, give the main facts of the Battle of Harlem Heights, Mr. Benson J. Lossing was among the first to attempt the identification of the site. When he wrote his "Field-Book of the Revolution," few documents referring to the topography were available, and he made the mistake of going too far south and east. He placed the action on the flats or "Plains" of Harlem, around McGowan's Pass, near the northeastern end of Central Park; and in consequence it was long called the "Battle of Harlem Plains." Mr. Henry W. Dawson, with General George Clinton's valuable letters to guide him, identified the true site so far as to shift it from the plains to the high ground of the present Morningside Heights; but having no reference to Jones' or Hoaglandt's houses, and being misled as to the location of Martje David's Fly, he put the fighting to the east of the Boulevard. Bancroft mentions it indefinitely, as having been fought south of the Manhattanville valley. The Hon. John Jay, with more documents at command, substantially agreed with Dawson, but retained the name of "Harlem Plains," in view of the fact that the action began on the low ground, although continued on the heights.

In February, 1878, the late Erastus C. Benedict, Esq., of New York City, formerly Chancellor of the Regents of the State University, read a paper on the battle before

the New York Historical Society, which was printed in pamphlet form soon after his death in 1881. His version of the action varied from all preceding ones in locating the scene of the principal fighting a mile *north* of the Manhattanville "Hollow Way," instead of south of it. The late Mrs. Martha J. Lamb, author of the well-known "History of New York City," adopted Mr. Benedict's version, and through her work it has been accepted by many readers. This new account was not based upon the discovery of new material, but on a new interpretation of the old. Neither Mr. Benedict nor Mrs. Lamb contributed any contemporary documents to the authorities bearing on the action. The work of research and compilation had been done by other writers. Mr. John Austin Stevens, founder of the "Magazine of American History," who, in the May number for 1880, critically reviewed Mrs. Lamb's account, and Mr. William Kelby, librarian of the Historical Society, who unearthed and compared much of the material utilized by the later writers in the case, place the entire fighting in and south of the "Hollow Way." General T. F. Rodenbough, in his chapter on this campaign, in Wilson's "Memorial History of New York City," does the same; as also the present writer, in Vol. III. of the Long Island Historical Society "Memoirs."

While these earlier writers may not agree with each other in certain points of detail, they are, with the exceptions mentioned, of one opinion respecting the site of the battle-field. Three or four of them, before preparing their accounts, not only made independent researches and carefully examined the topography of the field before modern changes set in, but discussed the details of the engagement among themselves with a view to reaching correct conclusions. In no case did it occur that the

action might have been fought *north* of Manhattanville, as the situation itself and the documentary evidence made it impossible to entertain any such theory.

Mr. Benedict seems to have been misled at the outset by attaching too strict a limitation to the name of the battle. He held substantially that the name "Battle of Harlem Heights" itself indicated where it took place; that it must have been fought on ground known by that name, and that the only ground so known was the range of heights north of Manhattanville where the American army was encamped. All the facts in the case are then made to fit this theory. Mr. Benedict's words, page 11 of his pamphlet, are: "If the battle was at the time known as the Battle of Harlem Heights, it would require very strong evidence to show that it was fought in either of these four places [indicated by other writers], no one of which was in the vicinity of Harlem Heights nor could with any propriety be called Harlem Heights." But as to this, many historical illustrations will occur to show that the name of a battle does not necessarily indicate its locality with topographical precision. A battle of Harlem, or any other heights, may or may not be fought on the heights. It may be fought at the base and around the heights, in defence of the heights. The troops may march out from their camps on the heights, as they did in this case, and associate the battle with the heights, without firing a single shot on or from the heights. The precise locality of the fighting can only be determined by the evidence in the case, and not by the name. It has been shown in the main narrative that this battle was fought in immediate defence of the heights, although not on them, and hence could be called with propriety the "Battle of Harlem Heights."

Furthermore, while that portion of the high ground on

which the American troops were encamped may alone have been known to them as Harlem Heights, the name was applicable to the entire ridge encircling Harlem Plains. It was so applied as late as 1814, when, upon the threatened attack by the British, many citizens of New York volunteered to work on the defences marked out by the engineers. The forts at McGowan's Pass, the block-houses in Central and Morningside parks, Fort Laight on the Boulevard, and the entrenchments enclosing the site of Grant's tomb were described at the time as the works at Harlem Heights. This designation was used by General J. G. Swift, chief engineer, United States Army, in his official report on the construction of the lines, all of which were south of Manhattanville, and it repeatedly appears in the newspaper references of the day. Subsequently the name Bloomingdale Heights came to be applied to the section north of One Hundred and Tenth Street, which has been supplanted in turn by that of Morningside Heights. Local associations are thus preserved in remembering the battle by the older description of Harlem Heights. As Sergeant Burnham of the Rangers accurately states, it was fought "on one of the Harlem Heights."¹

To sustain his theory and fight the battle north of Manhattanville, Mr. Benedict was forced to put an interpretation on the contemporary documents which cannot

¹ Locally, among the Harlem farmers, different parts of the ridge would be known by the names of the owners and occupants. The slope and bluffs of Morningside Park were no doubt called "Vandewater's Heights," the name Howe uses in his report. McGowan's Pass and Heights described the northern part of Central Park. Persons wishing to view the Hudson would go over to Hoaglandt's Heights or Hill, now Grant's and Claremont. Point of Rocks and Morris Heights above were well known. But generally speaking, it was all Harlem Heights.

be borne out. A few of his leading points may be noticed.

First, it is assumed in his account that, on the morning of the battle, the enemy were encamped on Morningside Heights, and that no fighting could have occurred within their own lines. But the proofs in support of the assumption fail to apply. Thus the statement of Captain Graydon, of the Pennsylvania troops, is quoted to the effect that our advanced picket at the Point of Rocks was "only separated from that of the enemy by a valley a few hundred yards over" (namely, the Hollow Way). But an important fact is withheld in the omission of Graydon's further statement that it was "now November" when he wrote. This officer was alluding to the situation nearly two months after the battle, when the main British and American armies had left Manhattan Island and were manœuvring in Westchester County. We made no effort to hold the heights as far down as Manhattanville except with a slight line of Rangers and others who were to watch the movements of the enemy. By that time, November, the latter had advanced their pickets to the Hollow Way. The situation thus had materially changed. The statement of Captain Harris of the 5th British Regiment, then serving with the Grenadiers, that they took post "opposite" to the rebels on the evening of September 15th, is also quoted, but Harris meant no more than did Captain Evelyn, of the 1st Light Infantry, when he wrote that the Americans were on the "opposite hills." Both these officers were speaking generally, and had no reference to the slopes which face each other across Manhattanville. Moreover, Evelyn states that he was encamped near "a strong pass" (McGowan's); and from Howe's orders we know that his battalion was posted at that point. "Opposite" in these quotations means a

mile or more opposite. Howe, Kemble, and Hall, we have seen, settle the question of the site of the British camp on the 16th. On the west side it was below One Hundred and Sixth Street.

Again, unable on his assumption to fight the enemy within their own lines on Morningside Heights, Mr. Benedict was forced to place the action within the American lines north of the Hollow Way. He places it in the very centre of their camp, and almost within gunshot of Washington's headquarters. His account maintains, in brief, that Knowlton's early skirmish probably occurred near One Hundred and Twentieth Street, and that the Rangers retreated along the low shore of the Hudson, with the Light Infantry pursuing, as far as One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street, where Audubon Park now lies. There Knowlton and Leitch attempted their flank attack ("One Hundred and Fifty-fifth to One Hundred and Fifty-eighth streets and Eleventh Avenue," says Mr. Benedict), which developed into the main action of the day fought from One Hundred and Fifty-fifth Street down to Breakneck Hill, at One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, on the east side, down which hill the enemy finally retreated to their camps. In other words, according to Mr. Benedict and Mrs. Lamb, "the evidence is overwhelming that Harlem Heights, between One Hundred and Fifty-eighth Street and Manhattanville, west of the Kingsbridge road, was ablaze with the fire of battle from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. That was the field of battle." Both these writers admit (p. 25, Benedict pamphlet) that Washington's force of nine thousand men was encamped within almost precisely the same limits, or, to repeat, between One Hundred and Sixtieth Street and Manhattanville.

It will be observed at once that, under this new version, "Harlem Heights" was an extraordinary action,

reflecting far more credit upon the British than upon the American army. The version represents that four hundred light infantrymen, chasing Knowlton's Rangers, actually penetrated the American lines for more than a mile without being observed by other troops; that they blew their defiant bugle notes in the rear of our main encampment; that Washington found it necessary to order out a flanking party to hem them in when there were ten American brigades already below them; that the British reënforcements, five or six thousand men, says Mr. Benedict, coming up to rescue the Light Companies, also penetrated the camp and fought for nearly two hours on our own chosen ground; and that they retreated by the Kingsbridge road under the ridge we occupied, from which our troops could have inflicted upon them the severest loss. In a word, we are given to understand that a mere detachment of the British army pushed through Washington's lines, fought, at times, within four short blocks of his headquarters, made the circuit of his strong position, and then returned to Morningside Heights, carrying all their guns and wounded with them, and losing but fourteen men killed! A proud day that, for the enemy! Their final retreat would have counted as nothing against the daring and brilliancy of the achievement, and their reports and descriptions of it would have been something besides the disguised admissions of defeat we find them.

Of course no such engagement occurred. No fighting took place that day north of the Manhattanville depression. Neither Mr. Benedict nor Mrs. Lamb seems to have been sufficiently impressed with the fact that our main force — Spencer's and Putnam's divisions — was throwing up entrenchments across the Island at One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street during the action, and that the fighting

must have been, at all events, below that point. Mrs. Lamb recognizes the existence of the line and yet puts part of the action above it.¹ Mr. Benedict places the line in one case at One Hundred and Sixty-first Street, in another (p. 26) at One Hundred and Fifty-third, while in another (p. 25) he accepts Clinton's statement that the lines ran across halfway between headquarters and the Hollow Way, which would be at One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street. That the latter is the correct location can be abundantly shown from other references, although Clinton's statement should be conclusive (see *ante*, p. 50). Thus Washington's orders for September 26th provide as follows for manning the works in case the enemy attacked: "Gen. Beal's brigade is to repair to the lines which cross the road by Colonel Moylan's lodging and extend their right flank to the middle redoubt by Mr. Kortright's house, occupying the same. Generals Wadsworth and Fellows are to take the remaining part of these lines, with the redoubt therein, on the North River. These three brigades to defend these lines or wait there for orders. . . . General Putnam is to command in front of the lines by Mr. Kortright's; General Spencer in the rear of them." Spencer's headquarters were at Kortright's, and the reference to that house would alone establish the location of the line. The house stood east of Amsterdam Avenue on about the line of One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, and at the time was the property of Charles Aitken of St. Croix. It

¹ Mrs. Lamb illustrated her account with a plan of the field, but its topography is erroneous at One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street, where "Silliman's" line (the main line) is extended considerably to the east of the main road. The road ran near the ridge at that point and entrenchments could not be thrown up east of it. Nor does the line extend westward to the Hudson, as it should be extended. The entire plan is faulty. "Silliman's" line is properly represented as the first line constructed, *aa*, in the present work, pp. 50-51.

had previously belonged to Colonel John Maunsell, of the British army. Just now it was temporarily occupied by Lawrence Kortright, who had retired from his own house at Harlem for safety.¹ Furthermore, Captain Graydon, quoting a description of these works in his "Memoirs," says (p. 175): "About a mile below Morris's house, two lines, nearly parallel to each other, were constructed by General Washington, when the army retired to the upper part of the island, after the evacuation of New York. These lines extended from the vicinity of Haerlem river, across the island, to the North river, and were in length, each about a mile. The first line, towards New York, intersected the great road leading to Kingsbridge, after the height is ascended from Haerlem plains." This intersection of "the first line" was at the top of old Breakneck Hill, directly east of Mr. Kortright's, which again determines the location of the line. Clinton is thus confirmed by Graydon, the reference to Kortright's, and by Sauthier's survey mentioned in the note on page 49. To repeat, that line where our main force entrenched itself during the progress of the action was the One Hundred and Forty-seventh Street line. This fact is fatal to the new version. As the writers in question extend the fighting more than ten blocks above that point, they present us with the singular spectacle of an army fortifying itself against an enemy supposed to be in its front when that enemy was engaged in what Mr. Benedict calls "a bloody battle" im-

¹ This fact appears in a letter from Mr. Garret Abeel (MSS. New York Historical Society), in which he says: "After the firing of the Enimies Cannon ceased on fryday Evening 13 Sept: I ordered my man Sam to put the Horse in ye Chair, and I proceeded that Evening as farr as the Hill above Harlem to the place where Mr. Law^r Kortright had retired to, Being a House Belonging to Mr. Eagans [Aitken] of St. Croix, where I was kindly received." The house is marked on the map, pp. 50-51, as "Mr. Kortright's."

mediately in its rear. Colonel Silliman (No. 13) is clear on this point. "Our brigades," forming a line across the Island, grounded their arms, he says, and then taking to spades and shovels worked till nightfall entrenching themselves. Toward noon they heard sharp firing about half a mile below them, where "we had two brigades lying as an advanced guard." These were Greene's brigades, frequently mentioned in the account of the battle, *ante*, and the sound of the firing heard came from the Hollow Way near the Fly, where the action began. Obviously there was no fighting in the vicinity of our main line.¹

In this connection, also, it may be noticed that, under the new version, only half the American army was engaged in the action, although fought on its own camping-ground. Why the whole of it was not thrown upon the venturesome British to overwhelm them, does not appear. How came Washington to miss his advantage? The plain answer is that no such advantage presented itself. Mr. Benedict and Mrs. Lamb misconceived the true character of this engagement in magnifying it into one of the leading battles of the Revolution. The force actually in the field, as already shown, was not more than eighteen hundred men on either side. In his roster of the American troops, page 6 of his pamphlet, Mr. Benedict estimates the numbers at forty-nine hundred, but the list contains many errors. One command is included five times under different designations, another three times, the Marylanders

¹ In his account Mr. Benedict twice places the main line at One Hundred and Sixty-first Street, and twice below it at One Hundred and Fifty-third Street. It could not in any case have been at the former street, as that one included no redoubts (Silliman says there were three on the line), and was never completed. As late as October 14th Washington's orders refer to the One Hundred and Sixty-first Street trenches as "the line which was *intended* to be run across from headquarters inclusively."

twice, and Greene's brigades, the bulk of the force, three times. A corrected roster would reduce the figures by more than three thousand. "Harlem Heights" was fought by advanced detachments of the two armies, and the field lay not within the lines of one or the other, but between their respective outposts.

The various other inaccuracies and mistaken assumptions of the new version hardly call for more than a passing reference. Thus, it is claimed that the cannon-balls and other battle relics unearthed on Washington Heights at different points above One Hundred and Thirty-first Street are "not without force as evidence of the place of conflict." But what conflict? The only fighting with which that ground is associated in our revolutionary history took place on Nov. 16, 1776, when the enemy captured Fort Washington. Both the British and American reports of that affair make it clear that Earl Percy's column, approaching in two divisions from McGowan's and Jones', drove back our pickets from the Hollow Way and approached our lines under the fire of their field-pieces. On the side of the enemy it was largely an artillery attack.¹ This will account for the cannon-balls. As further evidence, it is gravely asserted that "the bones of a horse, perhaps General Reed's horse, which was disabled under him in battle," were found on that site in 1879. But why not take it to be the steed of the British general? We have more than one English authority confirming "the accounts of Lord Percy's horse having been shot under

¹ Greene reports (November 16th) that "the enemy made their appearance on the hill where the Monday action was (namely, Claremont and Harlem Heights battle-field), and began a severe cannonade with several field-pieces. Our guards soon fled." Graydon states that the enemy also opened fire upon the heights from batteries on the east side of the Harlem. One or more six-pounders were brought into play by the Americans.

him at the siege of Fort Washington." At Harlem Heights, September 16th, the enemy had but two three-pound guns in the action, and the Americans not more than two, if any at all. Three-pound cannon-balls, as already stated, have been picked up on that field. In addition, that site was occupied and ploughed over for many years after the battle, which will account for the early disappearance of relics.

As to traditions, it is stated that Aaron Burr placed the battle of September 16th on the heights above the Hollow Way. But Burr's own words have never been reported. If he made that statement, his memory had lapsed. Mr. Benedict prints the letter of a Mr. Humphrey Jones, who writes: "My father at one time lived at Manhattanville, and he has shown me the battle-ground. It commenced on the hill near the Asylum, and the Americans drove the British up the road and down the hill, often called by the name of Breakneck Hill." This is quoted as showing that the action occurred in the vicinity of the latter hill. On the contrary, this writer evidently refers to the Breakneck Hill on the Bloomingdale road near Claremont. Why should the Americans drive the enemy "up the road" (north) from the Asylum? Jones clearly associates the action with the site below Manhattanville. The term "Breakneck" is known to have been applied locally to three or four steep descents between One Hundred and Fifteenth Street and Fort Washington.

General George Clinton, frequently quoted by Mr. Benedict as supporting his views, confutes them at all points. One statement is not quoted. The general tells us that on the night after the battle, the night of the 16th, he was stationed with his brigade "on the ground the action first began," or, as Washington's orders directed him, on "the heights commanding the Hollow Way." On the

next day the general sent a party out to bury our dead, which party discovered that the enemy had removed their own during the night. But if the battle-field lay a mile above the Hollow Way, the enemy must be credited with having accomplished the unprecedented feat of entering our closely guarded camp and carrying off their dead, twice crossing our outpost lines and main entrenchments unobserved!

How far the Stiles sketch of the battle-field confirms Mr. Benedict's theory, as claimed by its supporters, will be noticed under the next heading.

The publication of this new version was unfortunate. As it has received wide acceptance through Mrs. Lamb's otherwise excellent work, criticism and refutation are called for, in the interests of our local history. Here accuracy and fulness in detail are demanded, and alone lend value to the narrative.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES TO THE SITE OF THE BATTLE-FIELD

IF further evidence is necessary to establish the location of the battle-field on the westerly side of Morningside Heights, it may be found in certain references and material not previously utilized in this connection. What is known, for example, as the "Stiles sketch" of the action has been properly accepted as an important guide, but perhaps its most significant feature has been overlooked. The original sketch appears in the well-known diary of President Stiles, at Yale University, in which he kept a record of Revolutionary events for his own reference. The sketches, of which there are many, were his own drawings lightly outlined to illustrate special battles or the general military situation. Some of them are valuable as having been drawn from the descriptions given in person by officers from the field, or other eye-witnesses. Respecting the sketch of the Harlem Heights engagement, Dr. Stiles makes the following entry, under date of Oct. 18, 1776: "When I was at Fairfield I saw Sloss Hobart, Esq. a sensible Gent. & a member of the New York Convention. He gave me the following draught of the Action of 16 Sept. which began near the 14 m Stone & ended at the 8 m Stone. . . . We have two General Clintons in our Army. From one of them who was in the action [General George Clinton] Mr. Hobart received the account." The sketch, which the writer has frequently examined, is wholly from Dr. Stiles' pen; it was drawn by him, as we must infer, under Judge Hobart's eye.

It will be observed at a glance that the drawing (p. 117) gives the battle-field a decidedly westerly location. All the references, lines, and landmarks are well over on the bank of the Hudson River. Thus, the reference "A," which marks the north side of the Hollow Way, where the action began, is on the river side; and "B" and "C," marking the fences, are still nearer the bank; while the fence lines extend to it. The square, "E," indicating the buckwheat field, is westerly; and "F," the orchard, is again on the high bank, nearly on a line with the eighth milestone on Harlem Lane, which is almost precisely the position given it in the deed of Hoaglandt's farm referred to in the note on the "Plan" of the battle. This is a striking and valuable feature of the sketch.

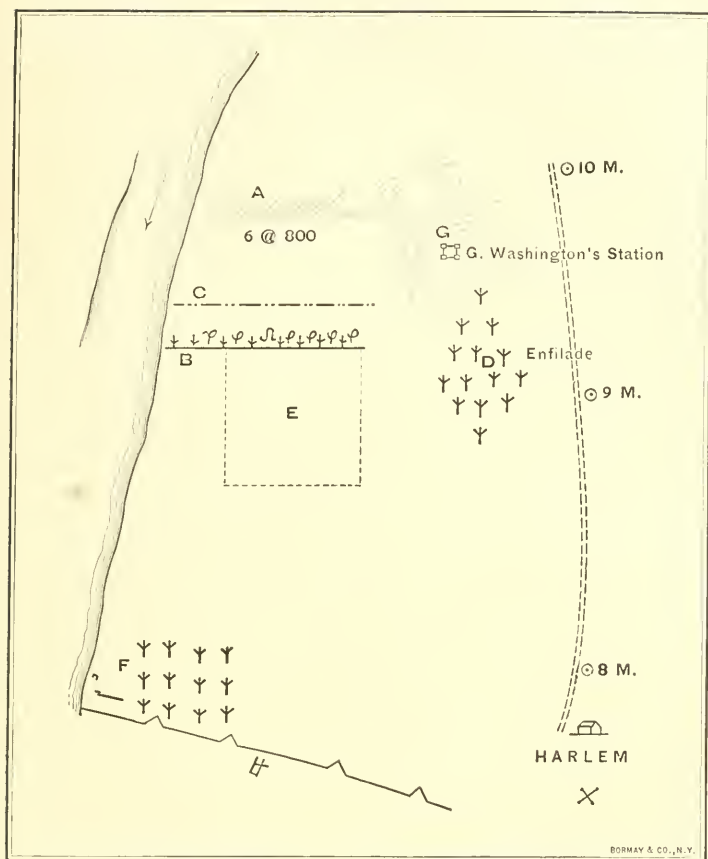
Furthermore, the sketch effectually disposes of the new version, in placing the entire action below the Hollow Way. Dr. Stiles followed Clinton's description — the description given in his letters printed in the "Authorities," and already liberally quoted in the narrative. When Dr. Stiles refers to "a Hollow Way," it is Clinton's Hollow Way; unfamiliar with the surroundings himself, he would know of no other. Clinton describes but one such locality, the only locality of the kind in the entire region, namely, "the Hollow Way which runs across from Harlem Flat to the North River at Martje Davit's Fly." This was the Manhattanville depression, where the main action began. In the sketch the movements are all south of it.¹

¹ One error appears in the Stiles sketch: the ninth milestone should be placed where the tenth milestone is marked, otherwise the references cannot be reconciled with the topography. Thus, the buckwheat field where the main action occurred is located directly opposite to the ninth milestone, which stood on the Kingsbridge road near One Hundred and Thirty-fourth Street. Clinton and others state that the field was "on the top of a high hill"; but there is no hill in that vicinity rising from a hollow way north of it. Taking the sketch

Further light is thrown on the location of the field in certain references to the point where the action terminated. From "E," says Dr. Stiles, the enemy fled, and attempting to rally in an orchard at "F," were so closely pursued that they stood but a few minutes, when the rout became general. The orchard is important. It brings the action down to the line of One Hundred and Eleventh Street, between the Boulevard and Riverside Drive. This is but a quarter of a mile above the Jones house. Just

literally, and comparing it with the correct topography as given in the "Plan," pp. 70-71, it will be noticed that the field would come on the line of the Boulevard between One Hundred and Thirty-second and One Hundred and Thirty-seventh streets, where the heights slope *down* to Manhattanville from the plateau above. The field, indeed, would lie partly in the Hollow Way. Again, if the distances are accurately indicated, one will have to search long for the hollow way marked "A" by Dr. Stiles, and located south of the line of the tenth milestone. That stone stood near One Hundred and Fifty-third Street. The hollow way would lie below, or at about One Hundred and Fiftieth Street; but nothing answering the description exists there. The only deep dip in the banks of the Hudson, on those heights, is to be found at the site of Audubon Park, six or seven blocks above; but that was in no sense a hollow *way*, and, as already shown, could have had no relation whatever to the actual battle-field. In a word, the key to the topography of the sketch is the reference "A," or Clinton's hollow way at Manhattanville. Dr. Stiles probably inserted the milestones as a general guide, without pretensions to accuracy. Judge Hobart could not have directed him, for in that case Dr. Stiles would not have inserted the memorandum above the sketch, already given, that the action began near *the fourteenth* milestone, or five miles above Manhattanville.

In the matter of distances and topography, Mr. Benedict was misled in several important particulars by consulting surveys showing roads and milestones as they stood some years after the Revolution. For instance, the Middle Road, line of Fifth Avenue, did not exist in 1776; the eighth milestone was not in Harlem near One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street; the ninth and tenth milestones were lower down than he indicates, etc. The correct distances are given in the maps accompanying this work. They represent the Revolutionary period. Changes set in soon after the war.



THE STILES SKETCH OF THE HARLEM ACTION, 1776.

EXPLANATION.

- A. The north side of a hollow way where the action began.
- B. Fence, behind which the enemy rallied the first time.
- C. Fence, from whence our people attacked the enemy at B, 150 yards apart.
- D. No field-pieces, but Virginia detachment enfiladed the enemy.
- E. Buckwheat field, where the enemy rallied a second time and an action ensued for 1½ hours, when the enemy fled, and attempting to rally in an orchard at
- F. Were so closely pursued that they stood but a few minutes when the rout became general.

[Original in Library of Yale University. Lettering printed.]

below Jones', near Striker's Bay, lay three British men-of-war in plain view of many of the combatants. Three different accounts mention them. Lieutenant Hodgkins says that the enemy "got under cover of their ships which was in North River. Then our people left them." Among the Stiles papers is a letter from Lieutenant Crossman, in which he tells his father: "I turned out volunteer & followed them and we won the ground, drove them till they brought their ships to bear on us, and the grape shot flew thick eno' for once." The soldier Martin remembers that the enemy "found shelter under the cannon of some of their shipping, lying in the North River." So the action closed on the river side. Confirmation comes from Montresor, who reports that the rebels were attempting "to cut off our left, and getting around us between our left and Hudson's River."

We may also recall the fact that on the night of the battle, September 16th, the enemy began to fortify their position, and in the course of three weeks had thrown up a strong line of works across from Jones' to McGowan's Pass. Of this line almost no mention has been made either by general or local historians. It ran directly across the upper part of present Central Park, and was intended to protect New York from rebel attacks while Howe operated with his main force elsewhere.¹ Among the "Authorities" will be found certain extracts from the

¹ From the "Narrative of Lieutenant-General Sir William Howe," London, 1780: "From that time [Sept. 16] to the 12th of October we were employed in fortifying the heights from Macgowan's Pass to the North River, about two miles from the enemy's most advanced intrenchments, and in getting possession of Paulus Hook. . . . There was a necessity of intrenching upon the height I have mentioned, in order to cover New York in the absence of the main army." An original MSS. map of this line is in the possession of the New York Historical Society.

orderly-book of the guards showing the progress of the work, especially at and around Jones' house. That point on their left was well secured. The "rock-redoubt" was just east of the house; a small battery in front. Mr. Jones, the occupant, evidently hoped to escape the ravages of war by securing an order of protection from the nearest British generals, Clinton and Leslie. He was supplied with one on the day after the battle, but inevitably his property was ruined.¹ Among the items of the "Claims" he subsequently presented, appeared one for material "for an extensive range of works from the river to McGowan's Pass which comprehended timber for the Forts and platforms for the Redoubts for upwards of 1800 yards—damage unspeakable." In this line of works we have an additional piece of evidence, indicating the point to which the enemy were pushed. Clinton says distinctly that they were "well contented to hold the last ground we drove them to." Again, "I lay within a mile of them the night after the battle and never heard men work harder." From his position at the Fly to the Jones' house was about a mile. Some days after the action, Colonel Glover wrote to Washington from Fort Lee, on the Jersey side, where he could overlook the field: "The enemy are forming an encampment on the edge of North River [at Jones' place] about one mile below where the battle was fought on Monday." At Fort Lee, also, some New Jersey troops witnessed the engagement, and from reports coming through them Peter Dubois made out

¹ The following appears, with many other interesting particulars in regard to the Jones estate, from Pasko's "Old New York": "Mem: Tuesday Sept. 17, 1776, Received a Protection of Major General Leslie, strictly requiring no person to molest or injure Mr. Jones, his family or property, on their peril. Wed 18th, the same confirmed by order of (the then) Maj. Gen. Clinton."

(Nos. 35, 36) that it was fought "on the banks of Hudson's River about two miles higher than Mr. Apthorps, near where the Gully terminates that crosses the island as you enter Harlem Lane from Kingsbridge." The gully was the Hollow Way, and from Apthorpe's to the upper edge of Martje David's Fly, where the fighting began, is precisely two miles.

An interesting letter from Captain Gustavus Brown Wallace, of Weedon's Virginia Regiment, throws light on what occurred near Martje David's Fly where the action began, and should be consulted in connection with what has been said on pages 73-76. To his brother at Fredericksburg the captain writes from camp, September 18th: "That night [the 15th] our Regiment were kept under arms the whole night, and in the morning about 9 o'clock we heard our picquet guard that belonged to a New England brigade attacked by the enemy, on which our Regt. was drawn up in a small field that we had been in all night and about five or six minutes after we saw the picquet guard running like the d—l,¹ on which we were ordered to advance forward with 7 Companies for over half a mile which we did and then formed in the woods on the side of a hill just above a meadow that was 150 yards wide. We then came in sight of our enemy who were posted on the opposite side of the meadow on a woody hill, on which Capt. West, Capt. Thornton, Capt. Ashby and a rifle company from Maryland were ordered under command of Majr Leitch to cross the swamp above the meadow and flank the enemy—after our seven companies of musquetry were drawn on the side of the hill, the enemy fired on our

¹ We take this running to have been the feigned retreat of Colonel Crary's party who were sent forward to decoy the enemy into the Hollow Way. See pp. 69, 70.

right wing, which brought on a pretty hot engagement across the meadow — the distance was so great that there was little execution done on either side till a Connecticut Brigade [probably Nixon's Massachusetts and Rhode Island] got betwixt us and the enemy in the thicket that lay on our side of the meadow, from which they killed a few. This drew the enemy's attention on us and them that were in the thicket, on which Maj^r Leitch was ordered to surround them, and in attempting it he and his party fell in with about 1500 of the enemy who had like to have taken Leitch and his party, but they made a manfull stand and exchanged three rounds when our poor Maj^r received three balls through his side on which his party were obliged to retreat, but did great execution. We had in that part of our Regiment 3 killed, 8 wounded. We had in the main body of the Regiment where I was three wounded. . . . The Major is thought to be in a good way. Thos. Hungerford got slightly wounded in the foot. Col. Weedon got part of the hilt of his sword taken off by a ball. All our officers and soldiers behaved with the greatest bravery and the troops that were engaged got Gen^l. Washington's thanks yesterday in publick orders. I forgot to tell you the enemy retreated from the battle field and we took possession of it. . . . When Leitch attacked them they retreated from us and we took the ground they occupied. The wood they lay in were cut to pieces by our balls. Though I say it that should not say it — the Virginia Regt. has got great honour in this action."¹

As Captain Wallace states in the opening of this letter that his regiment was in General Greene's command, and

¹ The original of this hitherto unpublished letter is in possession of Mr. Robert T. Knox, of Fredericksburg, Virginia, the writer having received it through the favor of the Rev. Dr. R. R. Howison, of the same place.

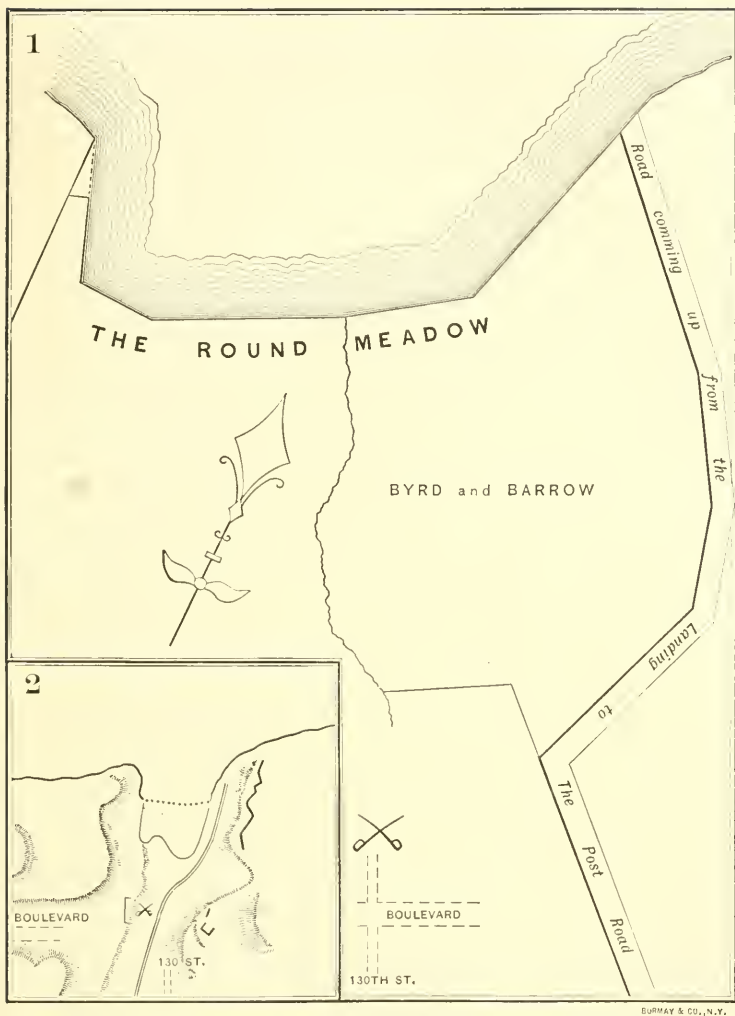
as Colonel Griffith adds that it was ordered out early in the day to take "a particular post in front," the position of the battalion seems to be made out. The meadow can be none other than the "Round Meadow" or Fly, and the hillside where the regiment was posted may be identified as the slope of the former Lawrence Hill, One Hundred and Thirty-third Street, near the Hudson. The enemy were on the opposite side, which was the Claremont Hill. Then Leitch is detached and marches east across "the swamp above the meadow" (see "Plan" of battle, where the swamp is indicated) to join Knowlton in the circuitous flank attack. Weedon's seven remaining companies take part, with Crary and Nixon, in the exchange of fire which continued for about an hour near the Fly, and with which encounter the main fighting of the day began. This has been more fully noticed on page 70. In other words, Captain Wallace's letter goes to sustain Clinton in opening the action "at" and "near the point of" Martje David's Fly. From the captain's statement that they fired across the meadow, it might be inferred that the fighting began a little further west in the Hollow Way than is indicated in the "Plan" of the battle. This confirms all the many other references placing the action on the westerly side.

The documentary evidence invariably and conclusively points to an action fought from the edge of Martje David's meadow south along "the banks of Hudson's River" to Nicholas Jones' farmhouse overlooking its waters.

PLANS OF MARTJE DAVID'S FLY.— The two plans of the Fly or Round Meadow opposite the next page throw light on several points in the text. Thus General Howe and other English authorities state that on the morning of the action the Light Infantry drove the rebels, that is, Knowlton's Rangers, "back to their entrenchments." These

entrenchments were light breastworks thrown up by Greene's command at different points on the northerly brow of the Hollow Way, some of which are shown on Plan No. 2. The breastworks nearest to the river were on the hill where the Lawrence mansion afterwards stood, and they would be in full view from the opposite, or Claremont, hill, where the Light Infantry halted and sounded the fox-chase call across the valley. When Howe goes on to report that we retired within our "works" after the battle, he refers to the same entrenchments. There were other works at Point of Rocks which were still well preserved when Randall made his official survey of the island in 1812-15. Modern improvements, fortunately, cannot efface the characteristic features of this part of the field. While the bay, or Harlem Cove, has been largely filled up and the meadow and swampy ground, extending back to the Boulevard, were long since filled in and covered with buildings, the "Hollow" remains. One can stand on the Claremont slope and overlook the entire scene where the action began. There is the valley across which the firing was kept up for about an hour after the Light Troops ran down the hillside and accepted our challenge. It was long-range musketry fire all along from the line of the Boulevard to the meadow—"a pretty hot engagement," says Captain Wallace, but the distance too great for much execution; "smart firing," and "very brisk," write Washington and Clinton; a "very hot fire," lasting more than an hour, says Lieutenant Hodgkins. During that hour Knowlton and Leitch were getting into position further east in the valley to hem in the Infantry with their flank movement. Then the action continued southward along the Bloomingdale road and the line of the Boulevard. This part of the field can be surveyed from the high ground along Claremont Avenue, east of Grant's tomb.

Plan No. 2 also explains and illustrates General Greene's statement in No. 23: "The enemy next day at Harlem Heights, flushed with the successes of the day before, approached and attacked our lines, where I had the honor to command." We may put the general on the Lawrence Hill when the fight opened. Just below him on the slopes and in "the thickets" his troops were beginning the day's work. Right there we would find the officers whose letters have been quoted in the narrative,—Hodgkins, Gooch, Wallace, and others. On this ground, too, General Clinton, as he tells us, was posted with his New York brigade on the night after the battle—"on the ground the action first began," are his words.



MARTJE DAVID'S FLY OR THE ROUND MEADOW, 1776.

- No. 1. Extract from the draught of City Surveyor Goerck, 1795. Lib. 52, p. 126, Register's Office, New York. Lettering printed.
- No. 2. From outline British draught, about 1776, in Library of Congress, Washington.

The swords and streets inserted show about where the main action began, 11 A.M., this being the most northerly point to which the enemy advanced. Compare with the "Vly" in the plan of the battle, pp. 70-71.

AUTHORITIES

AMERICAN, ENGLISH, AND HESSIAN

ON THE

BATTLE OF HARLEM HEIGHTS

INCLUDING LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS ON VARIOUS
EVENTS OF THE CAMPAIGN

AUTHORITIES

No. 1

WASHINGTON TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

CAMBRIDGE [Mass.], 13 March, 1776.

Sir,

In my letter of the 7th and 9th instant, which I had the honor of addressing you, I mentioned the intelligence I had received respecting the embarkation of the [British] troops from Boston; and fully expected before this, that the town would have been entirely evacuated. . . .

Holding it of the last importance in the present contest that we should secure New York, and prevent the enemy from possessing it, and conjecturing they have views of that sort, and their embarkation be for that purpose, I judged it necessary, under the situation of things here, to call a council of general officers to consult on such measures, as might be expedient to be taken at this interesting conjuncture of affairs. A copy of the proceedings I have the honor to enclose to you. Agreeably to the opinion of the council, I shall detach the rifle regiment to-morrow, under the command of Brigadier-General Sullivan, with orders to repair to New York with all possible expedition; which will be succeeded the day after by the other five in one brigade, they being all that it was thought advisable to send from hence, till the enemy shall have quitted the town. Immediately upon their departure, I shall send forward Major-General Putnam, and follow myself with the remainder of the army, as soon as I have it in my

power, leaving here such a number of men as circumstances may seem to require. . . .

As New York is of such importance, prudence and policy require that every precaution that can be devised should be adopted to frustrate the designs which the enemy have of possessing it. To this end I have ordered vessels to be provided and held ready at Norwich for the embarkation and transportation of our troops thither. . . .

[Sparks' Washington, Vol. III., p. 311. Ford's Washington, Vol. III., p. 467.]

No. 2

WASHINGTON TO THE COMMANDING OFFICER AT NEW YORK

CAMBRIDGE, 14 March, 1776.

Sir,

I have stronger reasons since I last wrote to you, to confirm me in my opinion, that the army under General Howe is on its departure. All their movements pronounce it; but lest it be but a feint, I must continue on my guard, and not weaken my lines too much, until I have a certainty of their departure. It is given out that they are bound to Halifax; but I am of opinion that New York is the place of their destination. It is the object worthy of their attention, and it is the place that we must use every endeavor to keep from them. For should they get that town and the command of the North River, they can stop the intercourse between the northern and southern colonies, upon which depends the safety of America. My feelings upon this subject are so strong that I would not wish to give the enemy a chance of succeeding at your place. . . .

The plan of defence formed by General Lee is, from what little I know of the place, a very judicious one. I hope, nay, I dare say, it is carrying into execution with spirit and industry. You may judge from the enemy's keeping so long possession of the town of Boston against an army superior in numbers, and animated with the noble spirit of liberty; I say, you may judge by that, how much easier it is to keep an enemy from forming a lodgment in a place, than it will be to dispossess them, when they get themselves fortified. As I have in my last told you that the fate of this campaign, of course the fate of America, depends upon you and the army under your command, should the enemy attempt your quarter, I will dwell no more thereon, though the vast importance of the subject would make an apology for repetitions needless.

[Sparks' Washington, Vol. III., p. 317. Ford's Washington, Vol. III., p. 473.]

NO. 3

WASHINGTON TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

HEADQUARTERS, AT COLONEL MORRIS'S HOUSE,
16 September, 1776.

On Saturday about sunset, six more of the enemy's ships, one or two of which were men-of-war, passed between Governor's Island and Red Hook, and went up the East River to the station taken by those mentioned in my last. In half an hour I received two expresses, one from Colonel Sargent at Horen's Hook, giving an account that the enemy, to the amount of three or four thousand, had marched to the river, and were embarked for Barn or Montresor's Island where numbers of them were then en-

camped; the other from General Mifflin, that uncommon and formidable movements were discovered among the enemy; which being confirmed by the scouts I had sent out, I proceeded to Haerlem, where it was supposed, or at Morrisania opposite to it, the principal attempt to land would be made. However, nothing remarkable happened that night; but in the morning they began their operations. Three ships of war came up the North River as high as Bloomingdale, which put a total stop to the removal by water, of any more of our provision; and about eleven o'clock those in the East River began a most severe and heavy cannonade, to scour the grounds, and cover the landing of their troops between Turtle Bay and the city, where breastworks had been thrown up to oppose them.

As soon as I heard the firing, I rode with all possible despatch towards the place of landing, when to my great surprise and mortification, I found the troops that had been posted in the lines retreating with the utmost precipitation, and those ordered to support them (Parsons's and Fellows's brigades) flying in every direction, and in the greatest confusion, notwithstanding the exertions of their generals to form them. I used every means in my power to rally and get them into some order; but my attempts were fruitless and ineffectual; and on the appearance of a small party of the enemy, not more than sixty or seventy, their disorder increased, and they ran away in the greatest confusion, without firing a single shot.

Finding that no confidence was to be placed in these brigades, and apprehending that another party of the enemy might pass over to Haerlem Plains and cut off the retreat to this place, I sent orders to secure the heights in the best manner with the troops that were stationed on and near them; which being done, the retreat was effected

with but little or no loss of men, though of a considerable part of our baggage, occasioned by this disgraceful and dastardly conduct. Most of our heavy cannon, and part of our stores and provisions, which we were about removing, were unavoidably left in the city, though every means, after it had been determined in council to evacuate the post, had been used to prevent it. We are now encamped with the main body of the army on the Heights of Haerlem, where I should hope the enemy would meet with a defeat in case of an attack, if the generality of our troops would behave with tolerable bravery. But experience, to my extreme affliction, has convinced me that this is rather to be wished for than expected. However, I trust that there are many who will act like men, and show themselves worthy of the blessings of freedom. I have sent some reconnoitring parties to gain intelligence, if possible, of the disposition of the enemy, and shall inform Congress of every material event by the earliest opportunity.

[Sparks' Washington, Vol. IV., p. 93.]

No. 4

WASHINGTON TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

HEADQUARTERS, AT COLONEL ROGER MORRIS'S HOUSE,
18 September, 1776.

As my letter of the 16th contained intelligence of an important nature, and such as might lead Congress to expect that the evacuation of New York and retreat to the Heights of Haerlem, in the manner they were made, would be succeeded by some other interesting event, I beg leave to inform them, that as yet nothing has been at-

tempted upon a large and general plan of attack. About the time of the post's departure with my letter, the enemy appeared in several large bodies upon the plains, about two and a half miles from hence. I rode down to our advanced posts, to put matters in a proper situation, if they should attempt to come on. When I arrived there I heard a firing, which, I was informed, was between a party of our Rangers under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Knowlton, and an advanced party of the enemy. Our men came in and told me, that the body of the enemy, who kept themselves concealed, consisted of about three hundred, as near as they could guess. I immediately ordered three companies of Colonel Weedon's regiment from Virginia, under the command of Major Leitch, and Colonel Knowlton with his Rangers, composed of volunteers from different New England regiments, to try to get in their rear, while a disposition was making as if to attack them in front, and thereby draw their whole attention that way.

This took effect as I wished on the part of the enemy. On the appearance of our party in front, they immediately ran down the hill, and took possession of some fences and bushes, and a smart firing began, but at too great a distance to do much execution on either side. The parties under Colonel Knowlton and Major Leitch unluckily began their attack too soon, as it was rather in flank than in rear. In a little time Major Leitch was brought off wounded, having received three balls through his side; and, in a short time after, Colonel Knowlton got a wound, which proved mortal. Their men however persevered, and continued the engagement with the greatest resolution. Finding that they wanted a support, I advanced part of Colonel Griffith's and Colonel Richardson's Maryland regiments, with some detachments from

the Eastern regiments who were nearest the place of action. These troops charged the enemy with great intrepidity, and drove them from the wood into the plain, and were pushing them from thence, having silenced their fire in a great measure, when I judged it prudent to order a retreat, fearing the enemy, as I have since found was really the case, were sending a large body to support their party.

Major Leitch I am in hopes will recover; but Colonel Knowlton's fall is much to be regretted, as that of a brave and good officer. We had about forty wounded; the number of slain is not yet ascertained; but it is very inconsiderable. By a sergeant, who deserted from the enemy and came in this morning, I find that their party was greater than I imagined. It consisted of the second battalion of Light Infantry, a battalion of the Royal Highlanders, and three companies of Hessian Riflemen, under the command of Brigadier-General Leslie. The deserter reports that their loss in wounded and missing was eighty-nine, and eight killed. In the latter, his account is too small, as our people discovered and buried double that number. This affair, I am in hopes, will be attended with many salutary consequences, as it seems to have greatly inspirited the whole of our troops. The sergeant further adds, that a considerable body of men are now encamped from the East to the North rivers, between the seven and eight mile-stones under the command of General Clinton. General Howe, he believes, has his quarters at Mr. Apthorp's house.¹

P.S. — I should have wrote Congress by express before now, had I not expected the post every minute, which I

¹ In this we have seen that the sergeant was mistaken. Howe's quarters were at Beekman's.

flatter myself will be a sufficient apology for my delaying it.

The late losses we have sustained in our baggage and camp necessities, have added much to our distress, which was very great before. I must therefore take the liberty of requesting Congress to have forwarded, as soon as possible, such a supply of tents, blankets, kettles, and other articles as can be collected. We cannot be overstocked.

[Ford's Washington, Vol. III., p. 416.]

No. 5

WASHINGTON TO THE NEW YORK STATE CONVENTION

HEADQUARTERS, AT THE HEIGHTS OF HARLEM,
September 23, 1776.

Sir,

Your favour of the 21st instant, enclosing the resolution of the Representatives of the State of New York, has come duly to hand, and will be properly attended to. I am exceedingly obliged by the readiness you declare you will pay to any commands which you may receive from me respecting the great cause in which we are engaged.

The manœuvres of the enemy, before their landing on Sunday last, were various and perplexing; however, about eight o'clock in the morning, they became extremely plain and obvious. At that time they began their operations by sending three ships of war up the North River as high as Bloomingdale, which put a stop to the removal of our stores by water: and about eleven o'clock those in the

East River began a constant and heavy cannonade for the purpose of scouring the grounds and covering the landing of their troops, where breastworks had been thrown up to oppose them. As soon as I heard the firing I immediately repaired to the place of landing, when, to my extreme astonishment, I discovered the troops, who were posted in the lines, retreating in the greatest disorder, and Parsons's and Fellows's brigades, who were directed to support them, retreating in the greatest confusion, and without making the slightest opposition, although only a small party of the enemy appeared in view. As I perceived no dependence could be reposed in these troops, and apprehending another impression might be made on the Harlem plains, by which means our retreat to this place might be cut off, I directed the heights to be secured, and our retreat was effected with little or no loss of men, though of a considerable part of the baggage, some of our heavy cannon and a part of our stores and provisions, which we were about removing, was unavoidably left in the city, though every means (after it had been determined in council to abandon the post) had been used to prevent it.

On Monday morning last, several parties of the enemy appeared on the high grounds opposite to our heights, and some skirmishing had happened between our troops and those of the enemy. On reconnoitring their situation, I formed the design of cutting off such of them as had or might advance to the extremity of the wood. I accordingly ordered three companies of Virginia riflemen, under the command of Major Leitch and Colonel Knowlton. [Description of the action about the same as in previous letter.]

[Force's American Archives, Fifth Series, Vol. III.]

No. 6

ADJUTANT-GENERAL JOSEPH REED TO HIS WIFE

HEIGHTS NEAR KINGSBRIDGE,
Sept. 17, 1776.

I wrote you yesterday p^r Post giving you an Account of our leaving New York. This had been determined on several Days ago — but the Removal of the Sick & many other Circumstances prevented its being done with that Expedition it ought to have been. Had the landing of the Enemy been delayed one Day longer we should have left them the City. But an unfortunate Idea took Place in the Mind of some of our Northern Generals that it might be defended or at least that some considerable Opposition might be made to the Landing — they undertook it — permitted the Enemy to land without even giving one Fire, could never be form'd but were drove by one Tenth of their Numbers — However as I gave you a particular Acc^t. yesterday I need not repeat it — Just after I had sealed my Letter & sent it away, an Acc^t. came that the Enemy were advancing upon us in three large Columns — we have so many false Reports that I desired the General to permit me to go & discover what Truth there was in the Acc^t. I accordingly went down to our most advanced Guard & while I was talking with the Officer, the Enemy's advanced Guard fired upon us at a small Distance, our men behaved well stood & return'd the Fire till overpowered by numbers they were obliged to retreat — the Enemy advanced upon us very fast; I had not quitted a House 5 minutes before they were in Possession of it — Finding how things were going I went over to the General to get some support for the brave

Fellows who had behaved so well — by the Time I got to him the Enemy appeared in open view & in the most insulting manner sounded their Bugle Horns as is usual after a Fox Chase. I never felt such a sensation before, it seem'd to crown our Disgrace. The General was prevailed on to order over a Party to attack them & as I had been upon the Ground which no one else had it fell to me to conduct them — an unhappy Movement was made by a Reg^t. of ours which had been ordered to amuse them while those I was with expected to take them in the Rear — but being diverted by this the Virginia Regim^t. with which I was went another course; finding there was no stopping them I went with them the new Way — & in a few Minutes our brave Fellows mounted up the Rocks & attacked them; then they ran in Turn — each Party sent in more Succours so that at last it became a very considerable Engagement & Men fell on every side — however our Troops still press'd on drove the Enemy above a Mile & a half till the General ordered them to give over the Pursuit fearing the whole of the Enemy's Army would advance upon them; they retreated in very good order & I assure you it has given another Face of Things in our Army — the Men have recovered their Spirits & feel a Confidence which before they had quite lost — We have several Prisoners & have buried a considerable Number of their dead — our own Loss is also considerable — the Virginia Major (Leech) who went up first with me was wounded with 3 Shott in less than 3 Minutes — but our greatest Loss was a brave Officer from Connecticut whose Name & Spirit ought to be immortalized, one Col Knowlton — I assisted him off & when gasping in the Agonies of Death all his Inquiry was if we had drove the Enemy.

Be not alarm'd, my dear Creature when I tell you the Horse I rode received a Shot [just] behind his fore shoulder — it happened to be [one] taken from a Number on the Hill — Tho' [many fell] round me thank God I was not struck [by] a single Ball & I have the great Happiness [to know] that I have by getting the General to [direct a] Reinforcement to go over contributed in [some way] to the Benefit which may result from this [action]. When I speak of its Importance I do not mean that I think the Enemy have suffered a Loss which will affect their operations — but it has given Spirits to our Men that I hope they will now look the Enemy in the Face with Confidence — but alas our situation here must soon be a very distressing one if we do not receive much Relief in the Articles of stores, provision, Forage &c. The Demands of a large Army are very great & we are in a very doubtful Condition on this Head.

[Reed Papers, N. Y. Historical Society.]

No. 7

ADJUTANT-GENERAL JOSEPH REED TO HIS WIFE

NEW YORK, Sept. 22, 1776.

I have just received yours of the 20th by which I imagine one of mine wrote the Day after the Engagement of the 17th had not got to Hand wherein I gave you the particulars which I was able to do better than almost any other Person as I happened to be in it when it began & assisted in calling off our Troops — when they had pursued the Enemy as far as was thought proper. It hardly deserves the Name of a Battle, but as it was a Scene so

different from what had happened the Day before it elevated our Troops very much & in that Respect has been of great Service. It would take up too much Time & Paper to go into a minute Description of the whole Affair. The Substance is, that we had a Party out under a very brave Connecticut officer Knowlton (who fell) watching the Motions of the Enemy—an Acc^t was brought up that the Enemy was advancing upon us in 3 Columns—but as we had so often been deceived by these Reports—I went out to see what Truth there was in it—and fell in with the above Party—while I was talking with the Officer the Enemy advanced & the Firing began at about 50 Yards Distance; as they were 10 to 1 ag^t our Party we immediately retreated—I came off to the General & after some little Hesitation prevailed on him to let a Party go up—which as I had been on the Ground I led myself they were Virginia Troops commanded by a brave Officer Major Leech—I accordingly went with them but was unhappily thwarted in my Scheme by some Persons calling to the Troops & taking them out of the Road I intended—however we went up both Men & Officers with great spirit—at the same Time some of our Troops on another Quarter moved up towards the Enemy & the Action began—Major Leech fell near me in a few Minutes with 3 Balls through him but is likely to do well. Knowlton also fell mortally wounded I mounted him on my Horse & brought him off—In about 10 [minutes] our People pressing on with great Ardour the Enemy gave Way & left us the Ground which was strew'd pretty thick with dead chiefly of the Enemy tho it since turns out that our Loss is also considerable—The pursuit of a flying Enemy was so new a Scene that it was with Difficulty our Men could be brought to retreat

— which they did in very good Order — we buried the Dead & brought off the wounded on both sides as far as our troops had pursued. We have since learned that the main Body of the Enemy was hastily advancing so that in all Probability there would have been a Reverse of Things if the Pursuit had not been given over as it was — You can hardly conceive the Change it made in our Army — I hope its Effects will be lasting — You will probably hear from other Quarters the double Escape I had — My own Horse not being at Hand I borrowed one from a young Philadelphian — he received a Shot just behind his fore Shoulder which narrowly missed my Leg. I am told that he is since dead — But the greatest was from one of our own Rascals who was running away, upon my driving him back a second Time he presented his Piece & snapp'd at me at about a Rod Distance — I seized a Piece from another Soldier & snapp'd at him — but he had the same good Luck. He has been since tried & is now under Sentence of Death — but I believe I must beg him off as after I found I could not get the Gun off, I wounded him in the Head & cut off his thumb with my Hanger — I suppose many Persons will think it was rash & imprudent for Officers of our Rank to go into such an action (Gen^l Puttnam, Gen. Green, many of the General's family — Mr Tilghman &c were in it) but it was really done to animate the Troops who were quite dispirited & would not go into Danger unless their officers led the Way.

Our Situation is very much the same as it was — we are fortifying Ground naturally strong. The Enemy lay about 3 Miles from us — they have been very busy bringing over Cannon, &c from Long Island but we cannot learn what they intend.

The Night before last there was a most dreadful Fire in the City but how it happened we are quite at a Loss — There was a Resolve of Congress against our injuring it, so that we neither set it on Fire or made any Preparations for the Purpose — Tho I make no Doubt it will be charged to us.

[Reed Papers, N. Y. Historical Society.]

No. 8

GENERAL GEORGE CLINTON TO NEW YORK CONVENTION

KINGS BRIDGE, September 18, 1776.

Since my last, many matters of Importance to the Public, and more particularly to this State, have taken place; But I have been so Situated as neither to find Leisure or Opportunity of communicating them to Congress. I returned late last Night from the Command of the Picquet or Advanced Party, in the Front of our Lines, and was just setting down to write to the Convention, and intended sending an Express, when I was favored with yours of Yesterday.

About the middle of last Week it was determined, for many Reasons, to evacuate the City of New York; and accordingly Orders were given for removing the Ordnance, Military, & other Stores from thence, which, by Sunday morning was nearly effected. On Saturday, four of the Enemy's large Ships passed by the City up the North River, and anchored near Greenage, and about as many more up the East River, which anchored in Turtle Bay; and from the Movements of the Enemy on Long Island and the small Islands in the East River, we had great

reason to apprehend they intended to make a Landing, and attack our Lines somewhere near the City. Our Army for some Days had been moving upwards this way, and encamping on the Heights, south-west of Co^l. Morris's, where we intended to form Lines, and make our grand Stand. On Sunday morning the Enemy landed a very considerable Body of Troops, principally consisting of their Light Infantry & Grenadiers, near Turtle Bay, under Cover of a very heavy Cannonade from their Shipping, our Lines were but thinly manned as they were then intended only to secure a Retreat to the Rear of our Army, & unfortunately by such Troops as were so little disposed to stand in the way of Grape Shot that the main Body of them almost instantly retreated, nay, fled without a possibility of rallying them, tho' General Washington himself (who rid to the spot on hearing the Cannonade) with some other General Officers, exerted themselves to effect it.

The Enemy, on Landing, immediately formed a Line across the Island, most of our People were luckily North of it, and joined the Army. Those few that were in the City crossed the River, chiefly to Powles-Hook, so that our loss in Men, Artillery, or Stores, is very inconsiderable. I don't believe it exceeds 100 Men, and I fancy most of them, from their Conduct, staid out of Choice. Before Evening, the Enemy landed the main Body of their Army, took Possession of the City, & marched up the Island, & encamped on the Heights extending from McGown's and the Black Horse to the North River.

On Monday morning, about ten o'Clock, a party of the Enemy, consisting of Highlanders, Hessians, the Light Infantry, Grenadiers, and English Troops (Number uncertain) attack'd our advanc'd Party, commanded by

Co^l. Knowlton at Martje Davits Fly. They were opposed with spirit, and soon made to retreat to a clear Field, south-west of that about 200 paces, where they lodged themselves behind a Fence covered with Bushes our People attacked them in Turn, and caused them to retreat a second Time, leaving five dead on the Spot, we pursued them to a Buckwheat Field on the Top of a high Hill, distance about four hundred paces, where they received a considerable Reinforcement, with several Field Pieces, and there made a Stand; a very brisk Action ensued at this Place, which continued about Two Hours our People at length worsted them a third Time, caused them to fall back into an Orchard, from thence across a Hollow, and up another Hill not far distant from their own Lines — A large Column of the Enemy's Army being at this Time discovered to be in motion, and the Ground we then occupied being rather disadvantageous a Retreat likewise, without bringing on a general Action, (which we did not think prudent to risk,) rather insecure, our party was therefore ordered in, and the Enemy was well contented to hold the last Ground we drove them to.

We lost, on this occasion, Co^l. Knowlton a brave Officer & sixteen Privates, kill'd. Major Leech, from Virginia, and about Eight or ten subaltern Officers and Privates wounded. The Loss of the Enemy is uncertain. They carried their Dead and wounded off, in and soon after the Action; but we have good Evidence of their having upwards of 60 kill'd, & violent presumption of 100. The Action, in the whole, lasted ab^t 4 Hours.

I consider our Success in this small affair, at this Time, almost equal to a Victory. It has animated our Troops, gave them new Spirits, and erased every bad Impression, the Retreat from Long Island, &c. had left on their

minds, they find they are able, with inferior Numbers, to drive their Enemy, and think of nothing now but Conquest.

Since the above affair, nothing material has happened; the Enemy keep close to their Lines. Our advanc'd Parties continue at their former Station. We are daily throwing up Works to prevent the Enemy advancing; great attention is paid to Fort Washington, the Posts opposite to it on the Jersey Shore, & the Obstructions in the River which, I have reason to believe, is already effectual, so as to prevent their Shipping passing; however, it is intended still to add to them, as it is of the utmost consequence to keep the Enemy below us.

[Miscellaneous MSS., N. Y. Historical Society.]

No. 9

GENERAL GEORGE CLINTON TO DR. PETER TAPPEN

KING'S BRIDGE 21st. Sept. 1776.

I have been so hurried & Fatigued out of the ordinary way of my Duty by the removal of our Army from New York & great Part of the public stores to this Place that it has almost worn me out tho' as to Health I am well as usual: but how my Constitution has been able to stand lying out several Nights in the Open Air & exposed to Rain is almost a Miracle to me — Whom at Home the least Wet indeed some Times the Change of Weather almost laid me up.

The Evacuation of the City I suppose has much alarmed the Country. It was judged untenable in Council of Gen^l Officers considering the Enemy possessed of Long-

Island &c., and was therefore advised to be evacuated. The Artillery (at least all worth moving) & almost all the public stores were removed out of it so that when the Enemy landed & attacked our Lines near the City we had but few Men there (those indeed did not behave well) our Loss however by our Retreat from there either in Men or Stores is very inconsiderable. I would not be understood that it is my Opinion to evacuate the City neither do I mean now to condemn the Measure it is done intended for the best I am certain.

The same Day the Enemy possessed themselves of the City, to wit, last Sunday they landed the Main Body of their Army & encamped on York Island across about the Eight Mile Stone & between that & the four Mile Stone. Our Army at least one Division of it lay at Col^o Morris's & so southward to near the Hollow Way which runs across from Harlem Flat to the North River at Matje Davit's Fly. About halfway between which two Places our Lines run across the River which indeed at that Time were only began but are now in a very defensible state. On Monday Morning the Enemy attacked our Advanced Party Commanded by Col^o Knowlton (a brave Officer who was killed in the Action) near the Point of Matje Davit's Fly the Fire was very brisk on both sides our People however soon drove them back into a Clear Field about 200 Paces South East [west] of that where they lodged themselves behind a Fence covered with Bushes our People pursued them but being obliged to stand exposed in the open Field or take a Fence at a Considerable Distance they preferred the Latter it was indeed advisable for we soon brought a Couple of Field Pieces to bear upon them which fairly put them to flight with two Discharges only the Second Time our People pursued them

closely to the Top of a Hill about 400 paces distant where they received a very Considerable Reinforcement & made their Second Stand Our People also had received a Considerable Reinforcement, and at this Place a very brisk Action commenced which continued for near two Hours in which Time we drove the Enemy into a Neighbouring orchard from that across a Hollow & up another Hill not far Distant from their own Encampment, here we found the Ground rather Disadvantageous & a Retreat insecure we therefore thot proper not to pursue them any farther & retired to our first Ground leaving the Enemy on the last Ground we drove them to — that Night I commanded the Right Wing of our advanced Party or Picket on the Ground the Action first began of which Col^o Pawling & Col^o Nicoll's Regiment were part and next Day I sent a Party to bury our Dead. They found but 17. The Enemy removed theirs in the Night we found above 60 Places where dead Men had lay from Pudles of Blood & other appearances & at other Places fragments of Bandages & Lint. From the best Account our Loss killed & wounded is not much less than seventy seventeen of which only dead (this account of our Loss exceeds what I mentioned in a Letter I wrote Home indeed at that Time I only had an account of the Dead — the Wounded were removed — 12 oclock M. Sunday two Deserters from on Board the Bruno Man of War lying at Morrisania say the Enemy had 300 killed on Monday last,) the Rest most likely do well & theirs is somewhere about 300 — upwards it is generally believed — Tho I was in the latter Part indeed almost the whole of the Action I did not think so many Men were engaged. It is without Doubt however they had out on the Occasion between 4 and 5000 of their choicest Troops & expected to have drove us off the Island.

They are greatly mortified at their Disappointment & have ever since been exceedingly modest & quiet not having even patrolling Parties beyond their Lines — I lay within a Mile of them the Night after the battle & never heard Men work harder I believe they thought we intended to pursue our Advantage & Attack them next Morning.

If I only had a Pair of Pistols I could I think have shot a Rascal or two I am sure I would at least have shot a puppy of an Officer I found slinking off in the heat of the Action.

[“N. Y. City during the American Revolution,” published by the N. Y. Mercantile Library Association.]

No. 10

GENERAL GREENE TO NICHOLAS COOKE, GOVERNOR OF
RHODE ISLAND

CAMP AT HARLEM HEIGHTS,
September 17, 1776.

I suppose you have heard of the retreat from Long-Island and the evacuation of New York. The retreats were both judicious and necessary, our numbers being very insufficient to hold such an extent of ground. His Excellency had proposed to evacuate the city and suburbs of New York some time before the enemy made their last landing, and had the Quartermaster-General been able to furnish the necessary wagons to remove the stores and baggage, the retreat would have been effected in good order, had the enemy delayed their landing twenty-four hours longer. Almost all the old standing regiments was drawn out of the city, in order to oppose the enemy at Hell-Gate, where they made an appearance of a very large body of troops, and movements as if they intended a landing.

We made a miserable, disorderly retreat from New York, owing to the disorderly conduct of the Militia, who ran at the appearance of the enemy's advance guard; this was General Fellows's brigade. They struck a panick into the troops in the rear, and Fellows's and Parsons's whole brigade ran away from about fifty men, and left his Excellency on the ground within eighty yards of the enemy, so vexed at the infamous conduct of the troops, that he sought death rather than life.

The retreat was on the 14th of this instant, from New York; most of the troops got off, but we lost a prodigious deal of baggage and stores. On the 16th we had a skirmish at Harlem Heights: a party of about a thousand came and attacked our advance post. They met with a very different kind of reception from what they did the day before. The fire continued about an hour, and the enemy retreated; our people pursued them, and by the spirited conduct of General Putnam and Colonel Reed, the Adjutant General, our people advanced upon the plain ground without cover, and attacked them and drove them back. His Excellency sent and ordered a timely retreat to our advanced post, for he discovered or concluded the enemy would send a large reinforcement, as their main body lay near by. I was sick when the army retreated from Long Island, which by the by, was the best effected retreat I ever read or heard of, considering the difficulty of the retreat. The Army now remains quiet, but expect an attack every day. Col. Varnum's and Col. Hitchcock's regiments were in the last action, and behaved nobly, but neither of the Colonels was with them, both being absent — one sick, the other taking care of the sick.

No. 11

MAJOR LEWIS MORRIS, JR., TO HIS FATHER

HEADQUARTERS, Septbr, 18th 1776.

Monday morning an advanced party, Colonel Knowlton's regiment, was attacked by the enemy upon a height a little to the southwest of Days's Tavern, and after opposing them bravely and being overpowered by their numbers they were forced to retreat, and the enemy advanced upon the top of the hill opposite to that which lies before Dayes's door, with a confidence of Success, and after rallying their men by a bugle horn and resting themselves a little while, they descended the hill with an intention to force our flanking party, which extended from the North river to the before mentioned hill, but they received so warm a fusillade from that flank and a party that went up the hill to flank them and cut off their retreat, that they were forced to give way. Their loss is something considerable, ours, about forty wounded and twelve killed. The impression it made upon the minds of our people is a most signal victory to us, and the defeat a considerable mortification to them.

[From the original in possession of Harry M. Morris. Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 12CAPTAIN SAMUEL SHAW, KNOX'S AMERICAN ARTILLERY,
TO HIS FATHERFORT WASHINGTON, Sept. 18th, 1776.

Ever since our retreat from Long Island, another from New York was looked upon as inevitable. This

event we were hourly expecting and providing for. Accordingly, far the greater part of our army, with near the whole of our military stores, were removed; and, had we been favored with one day more, we should have made a very good retreat. I came very near being taken in making my escape. It was thus. A heavy firing being heard from the ships that had the evening before gone up the East River, it was supposed by us, who remained in the city, that the enemy were landing above. Colonel Knox, myself, and several others rode up to see how affairs went; when we came up and found they had landed, the colonel sent me back into the city with orders for the companies [of artillery] to march up to oppose them. On my return I found the enemy had beat back that part of our army that were to cover the retreat of those from the city, and were in quiet possession of the ground. Our companies having no infantry to support them, returned, and made their retreat under cover of some woods on the other side of the town. In getting away, I was several times discovered and pursued by the enemy, but, having a good horse, effected my escape. All my linen, my stockings, surtout, blanket, in short, everything but what I had on, except a few articles which I left in this place when last here, are lost; the wagon in which they were sent out in the morning having been taken by the enemy. . . .

We are now in a much more proper place for carrying on the war than when in New York, as the enemy's ships can now be of no service to them in attacking. The day before yesterday we had a proof of this, when a part of them attempted to force a passage through some woods, and to take possession of a number of heights, but were repulsed with loss by an equal if not inferior body of our

troops, who behaved with as much bravery as men possibly could. I hope, by the blessing of Heaven, affairs will be in such a posture this way, in a few days, as to bid defiance to their future attempts. Now or never, is the time to make a stand, and, rather than quit our post, be sacrificed to a man. For my own part, it is but little I can do, but so long as the war lasts, I devote myself to it.

Oct. 11th, 1776.

The army still remains in tents. It will be late in the season before we get into huts or barracks. After our retreat from the city our troops had a skirmish with the enemy, and repulsed them. Though in itself it was a small affair, the consequences were great, as the check they received will probably be a means of keeping off an attack till the spring.

[Journals of Major Samuel Shaw, p. 19.]

NO. 13

COLONEL GOLD S. SILLIMAN TO HIS WIFE

HARLEM HEIGHTS,

17 Sept. 1776. 2 o'cl P.M.

Yesterday at 7 o'clock in the morning we were alarmed with the sight of a considerable number of the enemy on the Plains below us about a mile distant. — Our Brigades which form a line across the Island where I am were immediately ordered under arms — but as the enemy did not immediately advance we grounded our arms & took spades & shovels & went to work & before night had thrown up lines across the Island — There was nothing before but three little redoubts in about a mile & we are

at work this day in strengthening them. But yesterday a little before noon we heard a strong firing about half a mile below us in the woods near where we had two Brigades lying as an advanced guard. The enemy in a large body advanced in the woods a little before 12 o'clock & began a heavy fire on those two Brigades who maintained the fire obstinately for some time & then they were reinforced by several regiments & the fire continued very heavy from the musketry & from field pieces about two hours — in which time our people drove the regulars back from post to post about a mile & a half & then left them pretty well satisfied with their dinner since which they have been very quiet. Our loss on this occasion by the best information is about 25 killed & 40 or 50 wounded. The enemy by the best accounts have suffered much more than we.

A prisoner we have I am told says that Genl. Howe himself commanded the regular & Genl. Washington & Genl. Putnam were both with our Troops. They have found now that when we meet them on equal ground we are not a set of people that will run from them — but that they have now had a pretty good drubbing, tho' this was an action between but a small part of the army.

[L. I. Historical Society Series, Vol. III, Part II., p. 55.]

No. 14

GENERAL KNOX TO HIS BROTHER WILLIAM KNOX

HEIGHTS OF HARLEM, 8 MILES FROM N. YORK,
Sept. 23, 1776.

The affair of last Monday has had some good consequences toward raising the peoples spirits — they find that

if they stick to these mighty men they will run as fast as other people. Our people pursued them nearly two miles — about 1,500 of our people engaged of the enemy about the same number viz., the 2d. Battalion light infantry, the Highlands or 42d. 6th Battalion of Grenadiers and some Hessians. The grounds which we now possess are strong. I think we shall defend them — if we dont I hope God will punish us both in this World and the World to come if the fault is ours.

[Knox Papers, N. Y. Historic Genealogical Society.]

No. 15

MAJOR NICHOLAS FISH TO JOHN M^cKESSON, SECRETARY
NEW YORK CONVENTION

KINGSBRIDGE, 19th Sept^r 1776.

Our Retreat from the City, you no Doubt must have heard of er'e this. This Phoenomenon took Place on Sunday Morn^g last when our Brigade, who were the last in the City excepting the Guards, marched to the lines back of Stuyvesants, where from the Movements of the Enemy it was evident was the determination for landing. — The Enemy's Ships of War being drawn up in line of Battle parallel to the shore the Troops to the amount of about 4,000 being embarked in flat bottom Boats, and the Boats paraded — A Cannonade from the Ships began, which far exceeded my Ideas, and which seemed to infuse a Panic thro' the whole of our Troops, especially the Connecticut Troops who unfortunately were posted upon the left, where the Enemy landed without the least opposition ; for upon their near approach to the Shore these dastardly

sons of Cowardice deserted their Lines & fled in the greatest Disorder & precipitature & I know not but I may venture to say Infected those upon the Right, who speedily copied their vile conduct & then pursued them in their flight. I am sorry to say that the Panic seized as well Officers (& those of distinction) as Men, in so much that it magnified the Number of the Enemy to thrice the Reality & generated substances from their own shadows, which greatly assisted them in their flight to the Heights above Harlem.

We are now in possession of the ground from the Heights of Harlem to the Heights of West Chester, our advance Guard is posted a Mile from our Lines; here it was that our brave and heroic Marylanders, Virginians, &c. made a Noble & resolute stand against the Efforts of the Enemy on Monday the 16th drove them back, pursued, and forced them to retire—The Conduct of our Troops on this occasion was so counter to that of some others the preceding Day as nearly to form a Counterprise.

Our troops were in a most desponding Condition before, but now are in good spirits.

P.S. In the action of the 16th we lost about 17 killed and I believe as many wounded. It is remarkable that all our killed were shot thro' the Head which induces the belief that they were first taken Prisoners & then massacred.—The Number of the Enemy killed and wounded is not yet known, but it is generally thought, they far exceed us.

[Historical Magazine, Second Series, III., 33.]

No. 16

CAPTAIN JOHN GOOCH TO THOMAS FAYERWEATHER,
AT BOSTON

NEW JERSEY. FORT CONSTITUTION
Sept. 23, 1776.

I know you must be anxious for the certainty of events of which you can have at that distance but a confused account, as I was on the spot will endeavor to give you as Concise & Just account as possible; on the 15th Inst we evacuated New York & took all stores of every kind out of the City, and took Possession of the hights of Haerlem eight miles from the City, the Enemy encamp'd about two miles from us; on the 16th the Enemy advanced and took Possession of a hight on our Right Flank ab^t half a mile Distance with about 3000 men, a Party from our Brigade of 150 men who turned out as Volunteers under the command of Lieut. Col^o Crary of the Regm^t I belong to were ordered out if possible to dispossess them, in about 20 minutes the Engagement began with as terrible a fire as ever I heard, when Orders came for the whole Brigade immediately to march to support the first detachment, the Brigade Consisted of ab^t 900 men, we immediately formed in front of the Enemy and march'd up in good order through their fire, which was incessant till within 70 yards, when we Engaged them in that situation, we engaged them for one hour and eight minits, when the Enemy Broke & Ran, we pursued them to the next hights, when we were ordered to Retreat. Our loss does not exceed in killed and wounded twenty five men, the loss of the Enemy was very considerable but cannot be ascertained, as we observed them to carry

of their dead and wounded the whole time of the Engagement, they left a Number of killed and wounded on the Field of Battle & a great number of small Armes, the great Superiority of Numbers and every other advantage the Enemy had, when considered, makes the Victory Glorious, and tho' but over a part of their Army yet the Consequences of it are attended with advantages very great, as they immediately quited the hights all round us and have not been troublesome since, our people behaved with the greatest Spirit, and the New England men have gained the first Lawrells. I received a slight wound in the Anckle at the first of the Engagement but never quited the Field during the Engagement. I'm now Ready to give them the second part whenever they have an appetite, as I'm convinced whenever [they] stir from their Ships we shall drubb them.

[N. E. Historical and Genealogical Register, XXX., 334.]

No. 17

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM AN OFFICER IN OUR ARMY
TO HIS FRIEND IN THIS TOWN [NEW LONDON, CONN.]
DATED NEW HARLEM, SEPT. 21, 1776.¹

Last Monday the Enemy landed at New York, under Cover of their Shipping, when our whole Army retreated to this Place. As for myself I was out on a scouting Party as far as Hunt's Point — and on hearing the Cannon I immediately returned to the Regiment of Rangers, but too late to go into the City — Well, on Monday Morning

¹ The officer was probably Captain Stephen Brown, of Durkee's Conn. Regt., serving with the Rangers.

the General ordered us to go and take the Enemy's advanced Guard; accordingly we set out just before Day, and found where they were; at Day-brake we were discovered by the Enemy, who were 400 strong, and we were 120 — they march'd up within six Rods of us, and there form'd to give us Battle which we were ready for; and Colonel Knowlton gave Orders to fire, which we did, and stood theirs till we perceived they were getting their Flank-Guards round us. After giving them eight Rounds a Piece the Colonel gave Orders for Retreating, which we performed very well, without the Loss of a Man while Retreating, though we lost about 10 while in Action. We retreated two Miles and a Half and then made a Stand, and sent off for a Reinforcement, which we soon received, and drove the Dogs near three Miles.— My poor Colonel, in the second Attack, was shot just by my Side, the Ball entered the small of his Back—I took hold of him, asked him if he was badly wounded? he told me he was; but, says he, I do not value my Life if we do but get the Day: I then ordered two Men to carry him off. He desired me by all Means to keep up this Flank. He seemed as unconcern'd and calm as tho' nothing had happened to him. In the Spot where the Colonel was wounded, at least within 4 Rods round him, lay 15 or 16 of the Enemy dead, with 5 or 6 of our People. Several Deserters say we made great Havock among them. The next Day we went to bury our Dead, and found near a Dozen with their Heads split open by the Hessians.

[Connecticut Gazette, Sept. 27, 1776.]

No. 18

EXTRACT OF A LETTER TO A GENTLEMAN IN ANNAPOLIS,
DATED HEADQUARTERS, SEPT. 17, 1776.

We are now encamped between York and King's Bridge, on very advantageous heights, and have formed our lines from the North River to a Creek that makes out of the East River, running up to King's Bridge.

Soon after we came to New York, there was a council held by the General Officers, and the question was put, whether New York was tenable against the King's forces. It was carried in the negative.

Three days ago the whole of our troops evacuated New York; and the day before yesterday the Kings troops landed about three miles below this, where there were two brigades stationed, who abandoned their posts with precipitation.

Yesterday morning the Regulars came within half a mile of our lines, and made a stand. A few of our scouts, who were out, attacked and drove them off. In two hours after, two thousand of them returned. Gen. Beall sent out three companies of Riflemen, under the command of Major Mantz, who attacked them. Immediately Gen. Washington reinforced with the remainder of our brigade, together with Gen. Weedon's regiment from Virginia, Major Price's three independent companies, and one regiment of Rhode Islanders. Never did troops go to the field with more cheerfulness and alacrity; when there began a heavy fire on both sides. It continued about one hour, when our brave Southern troops dislodged them from their posts. The enemy rallied, and our men beat them the second time. They rallied again; our troops drove them the

third time, and were rushing on them, but the enemy had got on an eminence, and our troops were ordered to retreat, the General considering there might be a large number of the enemy behind the hill concealed; which was the case. We were informed by a prisoner that our men took, there were about eight or ten thousand concealed.

From the number of the enemy that I saw lay on the field dead and wounded, I think their loss must be three or four times ours. I have not yet been able to get a full account of our loss, only of our brigade, which is as follows: Capt. Low wounded through both his thighs. Twelve privates wounded, and three missing. Major Leitch, of Col. Weedon's regiment received three balls through his belly. More is the pity, for never was a braver hero. He stood the field, with the greatest bravery, till the third shot, when he was obliged to fall. He appears to be in good spirits. The Doctors are of opinion that he will recover. Col. Knowlton from Boston, killed in the field who distinguished himself at Bunker's Hill, as well as in this engagement. He will be interred to-day with all the honours of war.

From our present situation, it is firmly my opinion we shall give them a genteel drubbing, in case the Yankees will fight with as much spirit as the Southern troops. As near as I can collect, our loss, killed, and wounded, and taken, amounts to fifty men. We expect every hour that the general engagement will come on; and if we prove successful, the campaign will be settled for this present year. Gen. Washington gave great applause to our Maryland troops, for their gallant behaviour yesterday.

[Force's American Archives, Fifth Series, Vol. III.]

No. 19

COLONEL SMALLWOOD TO THE CONVENTION OF MARYLAND

CAMP OF THE MARYLAND REGULARS,
HEAD-QUARTERS, Oct. 12, 1776.

General Washington [Sept. 15] expressly sent and drew our regiment from its brigade, to march down towards New York, to cover the retreat, and to defend the baggage, with direction to take possession of an advantageous eminence near the enemy, upon the main road, where we remained under arms the best part of the day, till Sargent's brigade came in with their baggage, who were the last troops coming in, upon which the enemy divided their main body into two columns, one filing off on the North River, endeavoured to flank and surround us; we had orders to retreat in good order, which was done, our corps getting within the lines a little after dusk.

The next day, about 1000 of them made an attempt upon our lines, and were first attacked by the brave Col. Knowlton of New England, who lost his life in the action, and the Third Virginia Regiment, who were immediately joined by three independent companies under Major Price, and some part of the Maryland Flying Camp, who drove them back to their lines, it is supposed with the loss of 400 men killed and wounded; our party had about 100 killed and wounded, of the former only 15. Since which we have been viewing each other at a distance, and strongly entrenching till the 9th of October, when three of their men-of-war passed up the North river above King's Bridge, under a heavy cannonade from our batteries, which has effectually cut off our communication, by water, with Albany.

[Ridgeley's Annals of Annapolis, p. 261.]

No. 20

CAPT. BEATTY OF THE MARYLAND FLYING CAMP, TO HIS
FATHER COL. WILLIAM BEATTY, FREDRICKTOWN

CAMP NEAR KINGS BRIDGE, Sept.^r 18th 1776.

I have something worth telling you of what happened this week. Last Sunday the Enemy landed about 3 miles below us, and at the sight of 150 of them one brigade & a half of New England troops ran away in the most precipitated manner & chief of them lost their baggage; if they had stood their ground they might have cut them off. But by their landing they surrounded many of our troops in York which had no time to get out But they have a strong fort near New York where they are & have 3 months provision & ammunition a plenty, & the commander declares that he will not surrender while he has either. On Monday last the enemy thought to drive our troops farther, sallyed out & were attack by Major Mantz with the 3 rifle companys of our battalion under his command and Major Price with 3 of the independent companys of Maryland troops & 3 other companys of Maryland Flying Camp & a battalion of Virginians & some Northern troops the attack was very sharp on both sides for one hour & a half & then the enemy retreated one mile & a half to their lines—In all the action we lost but about 20 men killed & about as many wounded—among the dead is one Colonel of the Northern troops. The men all behaved with much bravery. In Capt Goods company there was but two men wounded, Capt Reynolds one, Capt Grooh two, one of which is the blind Cuppers son in Fredktown. The other learnt the hatters trade with Major Price, his wound is in the

breast, the other on the back of his arm above the joint of his wrist & so down to his fingers, the bone is not broke Our Company lay out from our tents from Sunday morning till Tuesday night

[Historical Magazine, Second Series, I., 147.]

No. 21

SAMUEL CHASE TO GEN. GATES

PHILADELPHIA, September 21, 1776.

On this Day Week the Enemy landed a Body of forces at Turtle Bay (after a severe Cannonade from their Ships in the East River to scour the Country and cover their Landing) our Troops posted in Lines thrown up to oppose their Landing abandoned them at the first appearance of the Enemy, in the utmost precipitation and Confusion: Two Brigades, commanded by Generals Parsons and Fellows, were ordered to support them, they also fled in every Direction, without firing a single Shot, notwithstanding the Exertions of their Generals to form them, and oh, disgraceful, on the appearance of only about sixty or seventy of the Enemy! by this infamous Conduct We lost a great part of our Baggage and most of our heavy Cannon which had been left at N York — our army retreated, and possessed themselves of the Heights of Harlem; our Headquarters at Roger Morris's house. On Monday last the Enemy appeared in the plains, $2\frac{1}{2}$ Miles from the Heights, about 400 under General Leslie A Skirmish began between them and a Party of Volunteers from several New England regiments commanded by Col^o Knolton. our People were supported by Companies from a

Virginia Battalion and from two Militia Maryland Regiments. The Enemy were obliged to retreat, with the Loss of about 100 killed and prisoners — Col^o Knolton, a brave officer, was killed. Major Leitch of May^d was wounded and despaired of. The Enemies main Army is now encamped between 7 and 8 Miles Stones. General Howe's Head Quarters at one M^r Apthorp's.¹

[Gates Papers, N. Y. Historical Society.]

No. 22

WASHINGTON'S GENERAL ORDERS

HEADQUARTERS, 16th September, 1776.

(Parole, Beall)

(Countersign, Maryland)

The arrangement for this Night upon the heights commanding the hollow way from the North River to the Main Road leading from New York to Kingsbridge. Gen. Clinton to form next to the North River, and extend to the left. Gen. Scott's Brigade next to Gen. Clinton's. Lieut. Col. Sayer of Col. Griffith's Regiment, with the three Companies intended for a reinforcement to day to form upon the left of Scott's Brigade. Gen. Nixon's & Col. Sergeants Division, Col. Weedon's & Major Price's Regiments, are to retire to their Quarters and refresh themselves, but to hold themselves in readiness to turn out at a minutes warning. Gen. McDougall to establish proper Guards against his Brigade upon the heights from Morris's House, to Gen. McDougalls Camp, to furnish proper Guards to prevent a surprise, not less than twenty Men from each

¹ Chase wrote from Philadelphia, giving the news as received there from Washington. See Document No. 4, and note, as to Apthorp's.

Regiment, Gen. Putnam commands upon the right flank to Night, Gen. Spencer from McDougall's Brigade up to Morris's House. Should the Enemy attempt to force the pass to-Night, Gen. Putnam is to apply to Gen. Spencer for a reinforcement.

HEADQUARTERS, Sept. 17, 1776.

(Parole, Leitch)

(Countersign, Virginia)

The General most heartily thanks the Troops commanded yesterday by Major Leitch, who first advanced on the Enemy, and the others who so resolutely supported them; the Behaviour Yesterday is such a Contrast to that of some Troops the day before, as must shew what may be done where Officers and Soldiers will exert themselves. Once more therefore the General calls upon Officers and Men to act up to the Noble Cause in which they are engaged, and support the Honour and Liberties of their Country.

The Gallant and brave Col. Knowlton who was an Honour to any Country, having fallen yesterday while gallantly fighting, Capt. Brown is to take the Command of the Party lately Commanded by Col. Knowlton; Officers & Men are to obey him accordingly.

The loss of the Enemy yesterday undoubtedly would have been much greater, if the orders of the Commander in Chief had not in some instance been contradicted by some inferior Officers, who, however well they may mean, ought not to presume to direct. It is therefore Ordered that no Officer Commanding a Party, and having received Orders from the Commander in Chief, depart from them without Counter Orders from the same Authority, and as many may otherwise err thro' ignorance, the Army is now acquainted that the General Orders are delivered by the

Adjutant General, one of the Aid de Camps, Mr Tilghman, or Col. Moylan the Quartermaster General.

[MS. Orderly Book, McDougall's Brigade, N. Y. Historical Society.]

No. 23

EXTRACTS FROM THE MS. LITERARY DIARY AND JOURNAL OF OCCURRENCES KEPT BY DR. STILES, IN POSSESSION OF YALE UNIVERSITY

Nov. 10, 1776. General Greene's letter 4th October speaking of the Enemy's Landing near Turtle Bay & tak'g possessⁿ of the City of N. Y. 15th Sept^r. "The Panic that struck Gen. Fellows's & communicated itself to Gen. Parsons' Brigade disgraced the last Retreat. The 2 Brigades run away from about 40 or fifty men, and left Gen^l Washington standing alone within an hundred yards of the Enemy. This disagreeable circumstance made the last Retreat very disgraceful. The Enemy next day at Harlem Heights, flushed with the successes of the day before approached and attacked our Lines, where I had the honor to command. The action or rather skirmish lasted about two hours: our people beat the Enemy off the Ground. Col. Varnum & Col. Hitchcocks Reg^t behaved exceedingly spirited and all the officers that were with the Regiments. The Colonels were both absent. Had all the Colonies good officers, there is no danger of the Troops: never was Troops that would stand in the Field longer than the American Soldiery. If the officers were as good as the men and had only a few months to form the troops by Discipline, America might bid defiance to the whole World. Gen. Put-

nam and the Adj. General were in the Action and behaved nobly."

End of G. Green's Lett.

* * * * *

Sept. 27, 1776. Last evening a Post came into Taunton — a letter from Lt. Ephraim Crossman to his father, dated N. York almost to King's bridge, Sept. 17. . . . "They attacked us next day (I suppose Monday 16 Sept.) and I turned out volunteer and followed them and *we won the ground, drove them till they brought their ships to bear on us*, and the grape shot flew thick eno' for once."

Gen. Putnam & Gen. Greene commanded in the Action with about 15 to eighteen hundred men, the Enemy having in the Action from 30 to 4500, Gen. Clinton & Gen. Mifflin were present in the Action as spectators. Gen. Clinton said he was ordered next day to bury the dead left on the field and buried 78 of the Enemy, the most of which fell in the Buckwheat Field. He judged we lost 120 killed & wounded — the Enemy 400 killed besides wounded: but phaps more probably less. Mr Hobart saw one who escaped from Harlem who told him that he counted 190 wounded of the Enemy in one barn & 110 in another, so 300 wounded & this not all. On the whole we fought well in this action.

Oct. 9. 1776. Major Lamb of N. Y. is just returned from his Captivity * * * He also told me that an officer came on board on Lds'dy Evening (15 Sept) damming the Yankees for runaway cowards & storming that there was no chance to fight & get honor & rise — he was in the Monday Action also & came again on board O Evening cursing & damming the War, saying he had found the Americans would fight & that it would be impossible to conquer them.

[From Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 24

WILLIAM ELLERY TO NICHOLAS COOKE, GOVERNOR OF
RHODE ISLAND

PHILADELPHIA Oct^r 11th 1776.

I saw General Mifflin lately, and he informed that in the fight the day after the enemy took possession of New York, by the best accounts he could get, and from the appearance of the field of battle, they lost between four and five hundred killed and wounded; and that we lost about one hundred killed and wounded. In the first part of this account Jared Hopkins, son of the minister in Newport, who saw the fight, agrees with the General, but says, that he saw our killed and wounded, and that they were much short of that number. They both, too, agree that some of our men who had behaved shamefully the day before fought gallantly there, and that with equal numbers we drove the enemy from the field. I believe they think the Americans will fight notwithstanding we have retreated and retreated.

General Washington, as I am told, played off a pretty manœuvre the other day. Determined to remove the grain and the furniture of the houses from Harlem, he drew out into the field a party of seventeen hundred. The enemy turned out as many. They approached within three hundred yards and looked at each other. While they were thus opposed front to front, our wagons carried off the grain and furniture. When this was accomplished, both parties retired within their lines. It is said that our men preserved very good faces. It would be of use to draw out our men in battle array frequently, to let them

look the enemy in the face, and have frequent skirmishes with them.

[Force's American Archives, Fifth Series, Vol. III.]

No. 25

EXTRACT OF A LETTER FROM HARLEM, DATED OCT. 3

Yesterday morning eleven hundred men were ordered to parade at daylight, to bring off the corn, hay &c which lay on Harlem plains between the enemy and us. This property has lain for a fortnight past unmolested, both sides looking at it, and laying claim to it until to day, when it was brought off by us. A covering party were within musket shot of the enemy, but they made no other movements than to man their lines; and three thousand of our men appearing, struck their tents, expecting an attack. Our fatigue party finished the business, and not a single shot was fired. These plains would afford an excellent field for a fight. I really expected an action, but the enemy declined it.

[Freeman's Journal or N. H. Gazette, Oct. 22, 1776, Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 26

FROM GORDON'S HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WAR

Sept. 16, 1776. On the Monday there was a tolerable skirmish between two battalions of light infantry and highlanders, and three companies of Hessian riflemen commanded by Brigadier Leslie, and detachments from the American army under the command of lieut. col. Knolton

of Connecticut and major Leitch of Virginia. The colonel received a mortal wound, and the major three balls through his body, but is likely to do well. Their parties behaved with great bravery, and being supplied with fresh troops, beat the enemy fairly from the field. The loss of the Americans, except in col. Knolton, a most valuable and gallant officer, was inconsiderable; that of the enemy between 80 and 100 wounded, and 15 or 20 killed. This little advantage inspirited the Americans prodigiously. They found it required only resolution and good officers to make an enemy they stood too much in dread of, give way.¹ The men will fight if led on by good officers, and as certainly run away if commanded by scoundrels. Sunday was an instance of the last, and the next day a confirmation of the first assertion. On Sunday, the officers, instead of heading and leading the men on to attack the enemy when landing, were the first to scamper off.

No. 27

FROM MARSHALL'S LIFE OF WASHINGTON

Sept. 15, 1776. Having taken possession of New York, Gen. Howe stationed a few troops in the town; and, with the main body of his army, encamped on the island, near the American lines. His right was at Horen's Hook on the East river, and his left reached the North river near Bloomingdale; so that his encampment extended quite across the island, which is, in this place, scarcely two miles wide; and both his flanks were covered by his ships.

The strongest point of the American lines was at Kings-

¹ Gen. Washington's letter to Gen. Gates.

bridge, both sides of which had been carefully fortified. McGowan's Pass and Morris's Heights were also occupied in considerable force, and rendered capable of being defended against superior numbers. A strong detachment was posted in an entrenched camp on the heights Haerlem within about a mile and a half of the British lines.

The present position of the armies favoured the views of the American General. He wished to habituate his soldiers, by a series of successful skirmishes, to meet the enemy in the field; and he persuaded himself that his detachments, knowing a strong intrenched camp to be immediately in their rear, would engage without apprehension, would soon display their native courage, and would speedily regain the confidence they had lost.

Opportunities to make the experiments he wished were soon afforded. The day after the retreat from New York, the British appeared (*Sept. 16*) in considerable force in the plains between the two camps; and the General immediately rode to his advanced posts, in order to make in person such arrangements as this movement might require. Soon after his arrival, Lieut Col. Knowlton of Connecticut, who, at the head of a corps of rangers, had been skirmishing with this party, came in, and stated their numbers on conjecture at about 300 men, the main body being concealed in a wood.

The General ordered Col Knowlton with his rangers, and Major Leitch with three companies of the third Virginia regiment, which had joined the army only the preceding day, to gain their rear, while he amused them with the appearance of making dispositions to attack their front.

This plan succeeded. The British ran eagerly down a hill, in order to possess themselves of some fences and bushes, which presented an advantageous position

against the party expected in front; and a firing commenced — but at too great a distance to do any execution. In the meantime Colonel Knowlton, not being precisely acquainted with their new position, made his attack rather on their flank than rear, and a warm action ensued.

In a short time, Major Leitch, who had led the detachment with great intrepidity, was brought off the ground mortally wounded, having received three balls through his body; and soon after the gallant Colonel Knowlton also fell. Not discouraged by the loss of their field officers, the captains maintained their ground, and continued the action with great animation. The British were reinforced; and General Washington ordered some detachments from the adjacent regiments of New England and Maryland, to the support of the Americans. Thus reinforced, they made a gallant charge, drove the enemy out of the wood into the plain, and were pressing him still farther, when the General, content with the present advantage, called back his troops to their intrenchments.¹

In this sharp conflict, the loss of the Americans, in killed and wounded, did not exceed fifty men. The British lost more than double that number. But the real importance of the affair was derived from its operation on the spirits of the whole army. It was the first success they had obtained during this campaign; and its influence was very discernible. To give it the more effect, the parole next day was Leitch; and the General in his orders publicly thanked the troops under the command of that officer, who had first advanced on the enemy, and the others who had so resolutely supported them. He contrasted

¹ The author received the account of this skirmish from the Colonel of the third Virginia regiment, and from the Captains commanding the companies that were engaged.

their conduct with that which had been exhibited the day before: and the result, he said evidenced what might be done where officers and soldiers would exert themselves. Once more, therefore, he called upon them so to act, as not to disgrace the noble cause in which they were engaged. He appointed a successor to "the gallant and brave Colonel Knowlton who would," he said, "have been an honour to any country, and who had fallen gloriously, fighting at his post."

No. 28

FROM GENERAL HEATH'S MEMOIRS

Sept. 15th. About noon, the British landed at Kepps's Bay. They met with but small resistance, and pushed towards the city, of which they took possession in the afternoon. They availed themselves of some cannon and stores; but their booty was not very great. Here the Americans, we are sorry to say, did not behave well; and here it was, as fame hath said, that Gen. Washington threw his hat on the ground, and exclaimed, "Are these the men with which I am to defend America?" But several things may have weight here;—the wounds received on Long-Island were yet bleeding; and the officers, if not the men, knew that the city was not to be defended. Maj. Chapman was killed, and Brig. Maj. Wyllis was taken prisoner. A few others were killed, wounded, and taken prisoners. The Americans retreated up the island; and some few, who could not get out of the city that way, escaped in boats over to Paulus Hook, across the river. The house, in the fort at Horn's Hook, was set on fire by a shell, and burnt down. The fort was afterwards abandoned.

Sept. 16th. A little before noon, a smart skirmish hap-

pened on the heights west of Haerlem Plain, and south of Morris's house, between a party of Hessian Yagers, British Light-Infantry and Highlanders, and the American riflemen and some other troops, which ended in favour of the latter. The troops fought well, on both sides, and gave great proof of their marksmanship. The Americans had several officers killed and wounded; among the former, Lieut. Col. Knoulton, of the Connecticut line, and Capt. Gleason, of Nixon's Massachusetts regiment, two excellent officers; and Maj. Leech, of one of the southern regiments, a brave officer, was among the latter. This skirmish might have brought on a general action; for both armies were then within supporting distance of the troops which were engaged.

No. 29

COLONEL DAVID GRIFFITHS, OF MARYLAND, TO MAJOR
LEVEN POWEL, LOUDON CO., VIRGINIA

CAMP ON HARLEM HEIGHTS, 18th September, 1776.

Our Rangers and Riflemen pretty far advanced in our front in ground very hilly and covered with wood were informed of the Enemy's motions by the Scouts and bravely advanced to meet them. A very smart action ensued in the true Bush-fighting way in which our Troops behaved in a manner that does them the highest Honor. After keeping a very heavy fire on both sides for near three hours they drove the enemy to their main Body and then were prudently ordered to retreat for fear of being drawn into an ambuscade. The 3^d Virg^a Reg^t [Weedon's] was ordered out at the Beginning to maintain a particular post in front and Major Leitch was detached with the 3 Rifle Companies to flank the Enemy. He conducted him-

self on this occasion in a manner that does him the greatest Honor and so did all his Party, till he received two balls in his Belly and one in his hip, which though very dangerous will not, I am in great Hopes, prove fatal. I have much reason to think his Bowels are unhurt—he is free from all Bad symptoms and is in great spirits and has a good appetite. We had 3 men killed and ten wounded. The Loudon Company suffered most—the Captain behaved nobly. Our whole loss is not yet ascertained. The wounded are not more than 40. Coll. Noleton of the N. E. Rangers is the only officer killed. . . . Our Battalion (after the Riflemen were detached) were attacked in open field which they drove off and forced them down a Hill. The Maryland and Virginia troops were principally engaged and have received the Gen^l thanks. I must mention that the two Yankee Reg^{ts} who ran on Sunday fought tollerably well on Monday and in some measure retrieved their reputation. This affair, tho' not great in itself, is of consequence as it gives spirits to the army, which they wanted. Indeed the confusion was such on Sunday that everybody looked dispirited. At present everything wears a different face.

[Lossing's Historical Record, Vol. II., p. 260.]

No. 30

LIEUTENANT JOSEPH HODGKINS, OF LITTLE'S MASS.
REGT., TO HIS WIFE AT IPSWICH

IN CAMP AT FORT CONSTITUTION,
New Jersey, Sept. ye 30, 1776.

My Dear,

We have had Experience of gods goodness to us in Preserving us in Battle and Carrying us through many

defilties Since I wrote my last: of which I shall give you a short account, viz.: on Sartaday ye 14 instant we moved to Harlem, and incamped on an Hill about nine miles from York, and about 12 o'clock that night we whare alarmed and marched about one mile, and thence Took Post and staid Till Sun Rise, then we marched home. We had not got Brakfast Before there whas a very heavy Cannonading at the Sitty, and we whar told that the Enemy whas about Landing Down to Harlem Point, whare we Expected they would Land By there motions. But while our Brigade with two more whas wating there: they Landed at a place called Turtal Bay 3 or 4 miles nearer York, and there whas two Brigades there. But they Being Chiefly milisha it whas said that Two hundred of the Enemy made them all Run, so they Landed without much Resistance and marched towards York and Took Possession of the Sitty about 4 o'clock on Sunday. Now you must think they whare in high spirits and thought all whas there own: so on Monday morning they thought they would atack us with about six thousand men and Drive us all over Kings bridge. But thay whare much mistaken. But however as soon as we heard that thay whare advancing towards us, the General sent out 200 Rangers under command of Coll. Knolton who soon met the enemy and fired on them and fought them on the Retreat, till thay got Pretty near us, then the Enemy Halted Back of an Hill, Blode a french Horn which whas for a Reinforcement, and as soon as they got itt, they Formed in to two Coloms: But our Brigade whas Posted in the Edge of a thick Wood and By some climbing up a Tree could see the Enemys motion and while they whare aforming, the General sent a Party to atack them which answered the End for which they whare sent; for our

People made the attack and Retreated towards us to the Place where we wanted them to come, and then the Enemy Rushed Down the Hill with all speed to a Plain spot of ground, then our Brigade marched out of the woods, then a very hot Fire Began on Both sides, and Lasted for upwards of an hour, then the Enemy retreated up the Hill, and our People followed them and fote them near an hour Longer till they got under Cover of their ships, which was in North River, then our People Left them.

The Loss on our Side is about 40 Killed and 60: or 70 wounded. There was none Killed in our Reg^t. and about 20 wounded. One of our Corp^s's was Badly wounded through the knees, but I hope he will due well; the Loss on the Enemys side is not sartin, but according to the Best accounts that we have had, they had near 500 killed and near as many wounded. They were seen to carry off several wagon Loads Besides our People Burryed a good many that they left. We were informed by two Prisoners that they had not the Milisha to Deal with at this time. They said that the Surgeon swore that they had no milisha to Day. This was the first Time we had any chance to fite them and I doubt not if we should have another opportunity, but we should give them another Dressing.

At this place where we incamped was within two gun shots of the Place where the Battle was, for we were always kept on the advanced Post next to the enemy until now; and now we are on the Jersey Hills where we have been since the 20 of this month; and I hope we shall stay here the rest of the Campan, as I have been at the Trouble of Building a Log House with a ston Chimney. Had not Lodged on any thing but the ground since we left Long Island.

Capt Wade has been sick and absent from me ever since the 13 Day of this month, and has this moment got hear and is pretty well again.

[Magazine of American History, Sept. 1882.]

No. 31

FROM THE DIARY OF SOLOMON E. CLIFT

A party from the enemy attacked the Americans, when a battle ensued, and continued about two hours, when the enemy gave way, and were pursued about two miles. In this action, the brave and intrepid Colonel Knowlton of Ashford, in Connecticut, was killed; and it is said Colonel Seldon, of Lyme, is among the slain. The loss the enemy sustained is said to have been very considerable. Our army is now between the nine and ten mile stones (Harlem) where they are strongly fortified and intrenched. The enemy's lines are about one mile and a half below them.

[Moore's Diary of the American Revolution, I., 310.]

No. 32

LETTERS FROM LIEUT.-COLONEL TILGHMAN, AID TO
WASHINGTON

HEAD QUARTERS, HARLEM HEIGHTS,
Monday, 16 Sep^r. 1776.

Our Army totally evacuated New York yesterday, the Enemy landed a party of about 3000 from Appearance four miles above the City where they encamped last Night. They kept up a very heavy fire from their Ships while their Men were landing, altho' no Body opposed them, I

imagine they did it, thinking we might have some men concealed behind some lines on the Water side. We removed everything that was valuable, some heavy cannon excepted, before we left the Town. Our army is posted as advantageously as possible for Security, out of reach of the Fire of the Ships from either River; and upon high Grounds of difficult Access. . . .

HEAD QUARTERS COL^o. MORRIS'S,
19th Sep^r. 1776.

. . . . On Monday last we had a pretty smart skirmish with the British Troops which was brought on in the following Manner. The General rode down to our farthest Lines, and when he came near them heard a firing which he was informed was between our Scouts and the out Guards of the Enemy. When our men came in they informed the General that there were a party of about 300 behind a woody hill, tho' they only showed a very small party to us. Upon this General laid a plan for attacking them in the Rear and cutting off their Retreat which was to be effected in the following Manner. Major Leitch with three companies of Col^o. Weedons Virginia Regiment, and Col^o Knowlton with his Rangers were to steal round while a party were to march towards them and seem as if they intended to attack in front, but not to make any real Attack till they saw our men fairly in their Rear. The Bait took as to one part, as soon as they saw our party in front the Enemy ran down the Hill and took possession of some Fences and Bushes and began to fire at them, but at too great distance to do much execution: Unluckily Col^o. Knowlton and Major Leitch began their Attack too soon, it was rather in Flank than in Rear. The Action now grew warm, Major Leitch was wounded early in the Engagement and Col^o. Knowlton soon after,

the latter mortally, he was one of the bravest and best officers in the Army. Their Men notwithstanding persisted with the greatest Bravery. The Gen^l finding they wanted support ordered over part of Col^o. Griffiths's and part of Col^o. Richardson's Maryland Regiments, these Troops tho' young charged with as much Bravery as I can conceive, they gave two fires and then rushed right forward which drove the enemy from the wood into a Buckwheat field, from whence they retreated. The General fearing (as we afterwards found) that a large Body was coming up to support them, sent me over to bring our Men off. They gave a Hurra and left the Field in good Order. We had about 40 wounded and a very few killed. A Serjeant who deserted says their Accounts were 89 wounded and 8 killed, but in the latter he is mistaken for we have buried more than double that Number — We find their force was much more considerable than we imagined when the General ordered the Attack. It consisted of the 2^d Battⁿ. of light Infantry, a Battⁿ. of the Royal Highlanders and 3 Comp^s. of Hessian Rifle Men. The prisoners we took, told us, they expected our Men would have run away as they did the day before, but that they were never more surprised than to see us advancing to attack them. The Virginia and Maryland Troops bear the Palm. They are well officered and behave with as much regularity as possible, while the Eastern people are plundering everything that comes in their way. An Ensign is to be tried for marauding to-day, the Gen^l. will execute him if he can get a Court Martial to convict him — I like our post here exceedingly, I think if we give it up it is our own faults. You must excuse me to my other friends for not writing to them. I can hardly find time to give you a Line.

[Memoir of Lieut.-Col. Tench Tilghman. J. Munsell, Albany, 1876.]

No. 33

RECOLLECTIONS OF JUDGE OLIVER BURNHAM, CORNWALL,
CONN., ONE OF KNOWLTON'S RANGERS

Soon after the retreat from Long Island, Colonel Knowlton was ordered to raise a battalion of troops from the different regiments called the Rangers, to reconnoitre along our shores, and between the armies. Being invited by a favourite officer, I volunteered, and on the day the enemy took New York, we were at Harlem, and had no share in the events of that day. But on the next, we were ordered to bring a large force of the enemy off the Ground they had selected, on to one more favourable for us. Colonel Knowlton marched close to the enemy as they lay on one of the Harlem Heights and discharged a few rounds and then retreated over the hill out of sight of the enemy and concealed us behind a low stone wall. The Colonel marked a place about eight or ten rods from the wall and charged us not to rise or fire a gun until the enemy's front reached that place. The British followed in Solid column and soon were on the ground designated, when we gave them nine rounds and retreated.

We lost about one-fourth of our little force, and believed that we killed many times more than our whole number of the Enemy.

Our number Engaged was only about 120, and I often heard it said in New York, while a prisoner there, that the British had twice that force.

Soon after we met our army, General Putnam Came up to Colonel Knowlton, and directed him to take the left flank, and the troops marched to meet the Enemy. But as the old troops marched slower than those who had

been Engaged, we fell on their flank before the others came into action. Passing over, we met the Enemy's right flank which had been posted out of our Sight on lower ground. They fired, and killed Colonel Knowlton and nearly all that had reached the top of the height. I was within a few feet of the Colonel when he fell. Our flank soon came up and drove theirs to their main body. We kept our ground during the action and kept up a Continual fire.

After discharging about Sixty rounds they retreated and we fell upon their rear, and took two field pieces as they were dragging them up through a buckwheat field. We then pursued them on to the ground where we first found them.

Thus ended the battle of Harlem Heights, which was of Considerable importance although little has been said of it in any history that I have seen that gives anything like a true account of that action, or alludes to the honor due Colonel Knowlton and his family for his conduct on that day — He had a brother and Son in the battle, all brave men.

Soon after, the two armies were at White Plains leaving a garrison in Fort Washington. A British army of Considerable force lay between us and New York. Our Rangers were stationed near Harlem to watch the Enemy, and had Several Engagements with Small parties of them. In one of these Major Coburn who Commanded was wounded by a musket shot through the arm, and left us, if my recollection is Correct, under Captain Pope. We remained until the Sixteenth of November in this situation, when we were warmly Engaged on all sides. We were about two miles below the fort and well sustained the attack until the enemy made good their landing across

Harlem River, when we had hard fighting to reach the Fort — Just as we had reached the gate the flag went out and Surrendered the fort and ourselves prisoners of war.

[From Original MSS.]

No. 34

ACCOUNT BY JAMES S. MARTIN, SOLDIER IN COLONEL
DOUGLAS' REGIMENT OF CONNECTICUT LEVIES

The next day [Sept. 16, 1776], in the forenoon, the enemy, as we expected, followed us 'hard up' and were advancing through a level field; our rangers and some few other light troops under the command of Col. Knowlton, of Connecticut and Major Leitch of (I believe) Virginia, were in waiting for them. Seeing them advancing, the rangers, &c, concealed themselves in a deep gully overgrown with bushes; upon the western verge of this defile was a post and rail fence, and over that the fore-mentioned field. Our people let the enemy advance until they arrived at the fence when they arose and poured in a volley upon them. How many of the enemy were killed & wounded could not be known, as the British were always as careful as Indians to conceal their losses. There were, doubtless, some killed, as I myself counted nineteen ball-holes through a single rail of the fence at which the enemy were standing when the action began. The British gave back and our people advanced into the field. The action soon became warm. Col. Knowlton, a brave man and commander of the detachment, fell in the early part of the engagement. It was said, by them who saw it, that he lost his valuable life by unadvisedly exposing himself singly to the enemy. In my boyhood I had

been acquainted with him; he was a brave man and an excellent citizen. Major Leitch fell soon after, and the troops who were then engaged, were left with no higher commanders than their captains, but they still kept the enemy retreating. Our regiment was now ordered into the field, and we arrived on the ground just as the retreating army were entering a thick wood, a circumstance as disagreeable to them as it was agreeable to us, at that period of the war. We soon came to action with them. The troops engaged being reinforced by our regiment kept them still retreating, until they found shelter under the cannon of some of their shipping, lying in the North River. We remained on the battle ground till nearly sunset, expecting the enemy to attack us again, but they showed no such inclination that day. The men were very much fatigued and faint, having had nothing to eat for forty-eight hours—at least the greater part were in this condition & I among the rest. . . . We had eight or ten of our reg^t killed in the action & a number wounded, but none of them belonging to our company. Our Lt. Col. was hit by a grape-shot, which went through his coat, westcoat and shirt, to the skin on his shoulder, without doing any other damage than cutting up his epaulette.

[A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of
a Revolutionary Soldier, etc. Hallowell, Me., 1830.]

No. 35

PETER DUBOIS TO MAJOR COLDEN, WRITTEN AT SECOND
RIVER, N. J.

TUESDAY, Sept. 17, 1776.

We have Three different and Equally Confused Accounts
of Another Action Yesterday between the Hours of 10 &

2 °Clock, Said to have happen'd on the Bank of Hudsons River about Two Miles higher than Mr. Aphthorps, Near where the Gully Terminates that Crosses the Island as you Enter Harlem Lane from Kingsbridge, in which Common fame by the Bye a Most Notorious Liar Says The Regular Troops were Routed with the Loss of about 400 Men Killd Wounded & prisoners with three field pieces whilst the Provincials lost only 48 Men.

I have Endeavored to Trace the Reports But Cannot deduce their Origin farther than from some Associators Now Universally known here by the Denomination of Flying Camp Men. These with one or More of the Heroic Battalions of their Corps were Posted at a Fort lately thrown up on the Jersey Shore, nearly Opposite to Fort Washington declare they saw the Engagement, from the heights opposite to it on the Jersey shore & that a boat with some people in it had come across the River from whom they heard these particulars. As yet I suspend my opinion of the Number Lost on either Side But think it probable there has been an Action and that the British Troops have Retreated — first Because Twenty seven flat Bottom Boats full of Soldiers were seen to go up the North River Early on Monday Morning — Secondly Because We have had Acco^{ts}. that the Provincials Began to throw up Intrenchments at this place a Sunday Afternoon at which they continued to Work all Night. And the Reporters Say the British Troops forced the first Line of Their Intrenchments and were on the Brink of Carrying the second when they were flanked by a Body of Riflemen which induced them to Retreat — I think it probable The Kings Troops have been if not totally, in a great Measure Ignorant of the Intrenchments and possibly highly elated with their late Successes and probably but Indifferently Acquainted wth

The Surrounding Grounds — All which Circumstances must have been of bad tendency to them — But may teach their Commanders a Lesson of Military Wisdom — Not to Undervalue their Enemy, To be Cautious & Circumspect before they Advance And thoroughly to Reconnoitre the Enemys defences as well as the Surrounding Grounds.

WEDNESDAY, Sept. 18th. 1776.

I have just seen an officer of The Jersey Forces from fort Washington who says he was in the Action on Monday. His Name is Deane & of the 5th. Reg^t. He told me The Regular Troops about 1000 in Number principally of Fraziers Reg^t. Attacked their Advanced post in its Intrenchments, But on a Brigade Appearing to Reinforce them Retreat^d. That by Estimation they must have had Killd & Wounded about 200 Men That the Provincials had only 11 Killd & 15 wounded among the former a New England Collonell. — He says the Main force of The British Army is Collected at the Seven Mile Stone Extending Cross the Island — That the Provincials have thrown up very strong lines from Harlem River a Cross to Hudsons River at the Nine Mile Stone, and have 10,000 Men the Flower of their Troops Encamp'd without the Lines Determind to Oppose the Regulars in the field sho^d. they attempt the heights, — that the Remainder of the Provincials are in different Encampments from Coll^o. Morris's to Kings Bridge & beyond it and Consist of about 20,000 men, who are all in high Spirits — this Account of the Engagement and of The Disposition of the Two Armys is the most probable & The Most Distinct of any I have yet heard & therefore I have given it you by way of Supplement.

[McKesson Papers, N. Y. Historical Society. Mag. of Am. History.]

No. 36

RECOLLECTIONS OF COLONEL HENRY RUTGERS IN AN
ADDRESS AT THE LAYING OF A CHURCH CORNER-
STONE, 1827

I cheerfully joined the army at Brooklyn Heights; and after that skirmish I escaped with the retreating army to the City of New York. I returned at once to my peaceful dwelling, but was soon after commanded to join the army in its farther retreat to Haerlem Heights.

On mounting my horse, and retiring across the fields in the immediate vicinity of this spot, with a slow step and an anxious state of mind, I contemplated my then present situation and my future prospects. . . . Soon after this, a division of the British army, taking the Bloomingdale Road, arrived at Manhattan Ville (now so called). Some sharp shooting immediately commenced between the riflemen of each army, in a buckwheat field, situated in the valley between them; many brave men on both sides were killed, and many more were wounded. The British were brought to Haerlem River, and from thence they were conveyed by water, to my dwelling house, which I had very recently left, but which had already received the *mark of Confiscation* on the south door (and, my friends that mark I have taken care still to preserve on my door). My dwelling house was then occupied by them as an Hospital, a Store House, or Barracks, as the circumstances of the times required.

[Magazine of the Dutch Reformed Church, Vol. II., p. 412.]

No. 37

RECOLLECTIONS OF MRS. BENSON MCGOWAN, OF HARLEM

Randall's Island, now owned by the New York Corporation, was the property of Captain Montessor before the Revolutionary War. It was confiscated, and after peace passed into the hands of Captain Randall, a native of Harlem, father of David Randall, Esq. Capt. Randall was a tory, raised a Company of Provincials and received a Commission, which he afterward sold out, and with the proceeds purchased the Island.

The Benson House at Harlem where I was born was built by my great grandfather and is more than one hundred years old. In September, 1776, when the British fired at Jacob Walton's house, my father became alarmed for his family, and putting a few valuables and necessities in a waggon took his wife and children to the country expecting to return in a fortnight, but we remained there till after peace was proclaimed. First we settled in Fish-kill and afterward lived at Salisbury in Connecticut.

The skirmish at Harlem in which Colonel Knowlton fell, took place near where the De Peysters lived, and north of there, that is, in the vicinity of the Bloomingdale Asylum.

The Blue Bell was a tavern on the Post road near Fort Washington, and which before and during the Revolutionary War, was kept by Blazius Moore, father of Blazy Moore who lives now in the Bowery.

Colonel Roger Morris' house is the same now owned by Madame Jumel with but little alteration. It was Washington's and afterwards Knyphausen's headquarters.

Mrs. Day's Tavern was on the old Post road near Manhattanville. Abraham King, formerly Alderman of the Twelfth Ward, I think, married the grand daughter engaged to Captain Romer. The old Post road ran where Haerlem Lane is now, near to Manhattanville, then for some distance under the Ridge, and then up to Break-Neck Hill. The old Bloomingdale road ran no farther (in the Revolutionary War) than Manhattanville where there was a landing.

[From papers in possession of the late Mr. Moore, librarian of Lenox Library, dated 1847.]

No. 38

CAPTAIN SEBASTIAN BAUMAN'S ACCOUNT OF HIS EXPERIENCES WITH HIS COMPANY OF ARTILLERY, SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1776

I remained on that day in New York on the grand Battry until 10 oclock in the morning — the Enemy to all appearance had landed in Gibb's [Kip's] Bay and thereabouts at 9 oclock ; not a musketeer had been left within a mile of the citty when I recieved orders to throw or force myself into the fort on Bayards Hill.

I had a Company of excellent men. But not a musket among us, except two Howitzers, which by order I was to bring out at the risk of my life. I marched through the Citty with Drums and Fifes playing, not meeting about six living souls on my way, untill my arrival at the fort, where I met some more Artillery Officers and a few men with about 25 musketteers, which Contributed something (toward an order we Received) to sustain an attack or

siege. The Enemy by information had extended himself almost across the Island, from Gibbs Bay to little Blumington. I concluded from all apparent circumstances we were entirely cut off from our army and left to the fate of war, as will appear from a second order, Recieved about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, to force our way to Kings Bridge, (note, through the combined army of Howe).

According to orders, [I] put our little army which consisted of about 80 men in the best order possible with flanking parties out and advanced along the North river as far as the Glass House, where we made a halt in sight of two Ships of War which lay close under shore to obstruct our advancing any that Way Without giving them Battle which we thought Best to Decline, as it would have Drawn the attention of Howe's Army by the firing towards us. Intelligence being brought that a Body of the Enemy's troops are marching towards the North River, I sent a corporal and a gunner from my company to Reconnoitre, with orders to inform themselves well, and us, of any Discovery from which we might reap any advantage.

In the main while we posted ourselves in a small Redowt which happened to be near by with full intention to Defend ourselves to the last in case of an attack. But neither one or the other appearing I gave over my two men for lost, Being took prisoners as I afterwards heard within 600 yards from our little fort. No provision — night setting in, the musketeers begin to shift for themselves by swimming and upon planks across the North River. There we were, and how to Extricate ourselves from being taken prisoners or how to save my artillery from falling into the Enemies hand will be seen in the following period.

I have observed before, night already had spread her mantle and in a great measure covered us from being seen, under which we held a Confederacy not to leave one another let the consequence be what it would and concluded to return to Bayard Hill, there to wait the issue of the next day, with the proviso to get across the North River if possible. Accordingly left our little fort, and in our march which has been as silent as night itself, We discovered a Boat with her sails up laying high and dry on the beach, which Boat we supposed to have been drove on shore by those ships of war which went up the river in the morning. All hands was set to work if possible to get her in the water — which at last with a deal to do accomplished. But how to get my Howitzers in the Boat was another matter of concern which we could not effect; therefore we concluded again to send as many men with the Boat as would work her over to Powl's hook; from thence they should return with another boat such as could take in the ordnance and stores which remained and I of consequence with it.

Maine while I sent another corporal in disguise to New York to see and hear what was going forward in the City and if possible to procure a Boat or Raft in Case I should be disappointed from Poulshook. After the stipulated time he returned adding the impossibility of my getting any releive from that quarter.

It being then 12 oClock in the night and very cold, Being on the brink of Dispair on account of my men, when a Boat arrived from Poulshook and carried me and artillery over.

[From MSS. in possession of Mrs. C. D. Marsh.]

No. 39

OFFICERS OF KNOWLTON'S "RANGERS," 1776

Lieut.-Colonel: Thomas Knowlton, Ashford, detached from Durkee's Conn. Cont. Regt. about Sept. 1, '76, to command of "Rangers"; mortally wounded in the "affair" or battle of Harlem Heights, Sept. 16; buried with military honors within the American lines on present Washington Heights, N. Y.

Major: Andrew Colburn¹ [New Hampshire], Major of Nixon's Mass. Cont. Regt., appt. to command of "Rangers," Oct. 1; wounded Oct. — and retired.

Adjutant: Thomas U. Fosdick, New London, ensign in Chas. Webb's Regt.

Captains: Stephen Brown, Woodstock, of Durkee's Regt.; in command of "Rangers," after Knowlton's death until about Oct. 1, when he returned to his Regt.

Thomas Grosvenor, Pomfret, of Durkee's Regt.; returned to his Regt. about Oct. 1; cont. in '77.

Nathan Hale, Coventry, of Chas. Webb's Conn. Cont. Regt.; absent as spy in enemy's lines; executed Sept. 22, '76.

Lemuel Holmes² [New Hampshire], 1st Lieut. Sargent's Mass. Cont. Regt.; rept. as Capt. Oct. 15, and commanded "Rangers," succeeding Maj. Colburn; prisoner Nov. 16, '76; exch. Nov. '78.

Lieutenants: Oliver Babcock, Stonington, 1st Lieut. Parsons' Cont. Regt.; taken pris. Nov. 16, '76, at Fort Washington; exch. about Jan. 1, '77; died Jan. 25.

Jesse Grant, Litchfield, of Chas. Webb's Regt.; pris. Nov. 16, Ft. Washington; exch. Dec. 17, '80.

Abner Bacon, Canterbury, 1st Lieut. Chester's State Regt.; cont. in '77.

Ephraim Cleveland [Mass.], 1st Lieut. Sargent's Regt.

¹ Major Colburn was the same officer who in the following year appeared as Lieut.-Col. of the Third Regt. New Hampshire "Line" and fell in the first engagement with Burgoyne's army near Stillwater, Sept. 19, '77. He came from North Marlborough in that State.

² Capt. Lemuel Holmes, of Sargent's Mass. Regt., also belonged to New Hampshire, town of Surry.

Lieutenants: Aaron Stratten [Mass.], 1st Lieut. Sargent's Regt.

William Scott [Mass.], 1st Lieut. Sargent's Regt.

Jacob Pope [Mass.], 2d Lieut.-Col. Jon^a Ward's Mass. Regt.; cashiered Sept. 28, '76.

Ensigns: Benoni Shipman, New Haven, of Chas. Webb's Regt.; cont. in '77.

Aaron Cleaveland, Canterbury, of Chester's State Regt.

Daniel Knowlton, Ashford, of Chester's State Regt.; taken prisoner Nov. 26, at Ft. Washington; elder brother of Col. Knowlton.

Thomas Hender, Hartford, of Col. Wyllys' Conn. Cont. Regt.; taken prisoner at Ft. Washington, Nov. 16, '76.

Ebenezer West, —, of Hitchcock's R. I. Cont. Regt.

NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND PRIVATES, OF THE RANGERS,

Taken Prisoners at Surrender of Fort Washington, N. Y. Island, Nov. 16, '76

DETACHED FROM DURKEE'S REGT.

— CONN.

Serjeants.

Benjamin Irish,
William Stuart.

Privates.

Nath'l. Chesebrough,
John Lay,
George Wilson,
Roswell Becket,
Jabez Dewey,
William Ashcraft,
Joseph Sheffield,
Roger Billings,
Phineas Ellis,
Reuben Skespics,
Ammon Harvey,
Joshua Davis,
Seth Norton,
Jos. Hancock,
Daniel Sampson,
Abner Cole,

Daniel Vanderpole,

Moses Gun,

Enoch Greenward,

Thomas Skespics,

Charles Kelley,

James Cheesbrough,

Jos. Lankfort,

Jos. Smith,

Joel Jones, died Jan. 17.

Daniel Conner,

Daniel Hitt,

William Pearce.

DETACHED FROM WYLLYS' REGT.

— CONN.

Serjeant.

John Benton.

Privates.

Simeon Linsey,

Elisha Taylor,

Seth Done,

Richard Chamberlain,

DETACHED FROM WYLLYS' REGT.

— CONN. (*continued*).

Privates.

Timothy Hubbert,
Samuel Fails,
Oliver Burnham,
Asa Barns,
Thomas Holmes,
Levy Latimer.

DETACHED FROM C. WEBB'S REGT.

— CONN.

Serjeants.

David Thorp,
Samuel Laes.

Privates.

Samuel Peck,
Elisha Howel,
Elisha Judson,
William Jones,
Elisha Peck,
Samuel Robbins, died Jan. 14.
Thomas Herdike,
David Beanel,
Samuel Smith,
James Bugbee,
Roger Blaisdel,
Hull Curtiss,
Zephaniah Cummings, died Feb.
7.

Thomas Cook,
Benjamin Devenport,
Thomas Fargo,
Elihu Grant,
Timothy Hodges,
Samuel Hale.

DETACHED FROM CHESTER'S

REGT. — CONN.

Serjeants.

Abijah Read (Canterbury), died
Jan. 28.
Perese Ainsworth.

Privates.

Jacob Pettibone,
Rufus Downing,
Rufus Hibbert,
Jedediah Dyer, died Jan. 20.
Abner Adams,
John Waid,
Philip Williams,
John Trarveret,
Thomas Stone,
Timothy Cady,
Pender Jenison,
Philip Abbott,
Edward Hughes,
John Hobbs,
Luman Long,
Richard Parsons, died Jan. 19.
Hezekiah Wadsworth,
Aden Marcey,
John Miner,
William Woodward,
John Cooks,
Josiah Underwood,
John Adams, died Jan. 16.

DETACHED FROM SARGENT'S

REGT. — MASS.

Serjeants.

Frederick Putnam,
John Rains.

Corporals.

Niles Beckwith,
Josiah Macomber.

Privates.

Nath'l Turner,
Daniel Griswold,
Joseph Goodrich, died Dec. 2.
Joseph Spencer, died Nov. 2.
William Scott,
Nicholas Ashley,
Aaron Pettibone,
Samuel Silsby,

DETACHED FROM SARGENT'S
REGT.—MASS. (*continued*).

Privates.

William Woodward,
Levy Proctor,
Israel Sheldon,
Eliphalet Mason,

Barna How,
William Crowfoot,
John Mores,
Aaron Woodward,
John Taylor,
Barna Allien, died Nov. 28.
Joshua Wright.

[The foregoing list includes only those who were taken prisoners. There were doubtless a considerable number of others who were in the action, but who afterwards returned to their regiments, such as Serjt. Stephen Hempstead, New London, of Webb's Regt., a "Ranger," wounded at Harlem Heights; Serjt. Nehemiah Holt, whom tradition places by the side of Knowlton when he fell; Frederick Knowlton, the Colonel's son, who states in his pension papers that on his father's death he was obliged to return to his home; Corp. George Wilson, etc.]

Note.—The year of the deaths noted above is not given. They occurred before Nov., '78.

[From Connecticut Revolutionary Record, Adjutant-General's Office, Hartford, 1887.]

No. 40

PARTIAL LIST OF AMERICAN CASUALTIES IN THE HAR-
LEM HEIGHTS ENGAGEMENT

Officers

✓ Lieut.-Colonel Thomas Knowlton, Rangers, mortally wounded.

Major Andrew Leitch, Third Virginia, mortally wounded.

Captain Micajah Gleason, Nixon's Mass., killed.

Lieut. Noell Allen, Varnum's R. I., killed.

Captain Lowe, Ewing's Maryland, wounded.

Rank and File

Serjt. Josiah Waight, Nixon's, killed.

Corp. John Maung, " "

Private James Townshend, Nixon's, killed.

“ Thomas Ryne, “ prisoner.

“ Dennis Lines, Varnum's, killed.

“ John McCoy, “ “

“ Samuel Britton, “ “

Serjt. John Porter, Hitchcock's R. I., killed.

Private James White, “ “ “

“ Joseph West, “ “ “

“ Thomas Jones, “ “ “

“ David Wilson, “ “ “

“ John Cain, “ “ missing.

Serjt. John McLarty, Little's Mass., prisoner.

Private Elisha Sampson, Bailey's Mass., mortally wounded.

“ William Weathers, “ “ “ “

“ Job Churchill, “ “ missing.

“ David Hoskins, “ “ “

“ Zebediah Sampson, “ “ “

“ Abel Thrasher, “ “ “

“ Asa Hunt, “ “ “

“ — Hackett, Sargent's Mass., killed.

“ — Herbert, “ “ prisoner.

“ — O'Brien, “ “ “

“ — Alexander, “ “ “

Serjt. John Beach, Douglas' Conn., missing.

Private Titus Mix, “ “ killed.

“ William Meriams, Douglas' Conn., killed.

“ Robert Ashbo, Tyler's Conn., “

“ James Christa, Holman's Mass., “

[Force's Archives, Fifth Series, Vol. III., pp. 717-22.]

No. 41

MEMORANDA IN REGARD TO THE RANGERS AND PRISONERS IN NEW YORK FROM LIEUT. OLIVER BABCOCK'S DIARY AND PENSION CLAIMS

Strength of the Companies

Oct. 10, 1776.			Oct. 20, 1776.		
[Lieut.]	Pope	45 men	Capt. Holmes		28 men
"	Hender	26	[Lieut.]	Bacon	15
	Officers	18	"	Hender	24
"	Bacon	15	"	Grant	39
"	Holms	30		Officers	14
"	Grant	40	"	Babcock	43
		<u>174</u>			<u>163</u>

Receipts

Nov. 2, 1776.

Rec^d of Lt. Babcock Fifty Shillings 10*d* $\frac{1}{2}$ L. M., same money due to the Company under my command in the Ranging service for the first fortnight in said service.

Pr. Theo. Hender, Com^d Sd Co.

Nov. 2, 1776.

Rec^d of Lt. Babcock Three pounds $\frac{8}{9}$ L. M., same money for the Company of Rangers commanded Late by Capt. Hale.

Tho^d Updike Fosdick,

Ensign.

Harlem, Oct. 29, 1776.

Rec^d of Lieut. Babcock Fifty Seven Shillings and 9*d* L. M. in full for same money due to my Company while in the Ranging Service.

Pr Stephen Brown,

Capt.

Nov. 2, 1776.

Rec^d of Lt. Babcock three pounds, 8s, 9d, same money for the Ranging Company under any Command.

Lemuel Holmes,
Capt.

Statements in Pension Claims

LIEUT. ABNER BACON says: "I was selected as one of the Rangers and served under the intrepid Lt. Col. Knowlton, and was in the engagement on York Island when he fell a victim to the enemy."

DAVID THORP, of Woodbury, Conn., belonged to Col. Charles Webb's Continental Regiment, and served first near Boston. In the spring of 1776 he was detailed to go with Genl Lee to the Southern States, as one of his Life Guard. They accomplished "the tedious march of 1000 miles" and then returned to New York city. After the Battle of Long Island, Thorp speaks of his service as follows:

"There was orders to raise a company of 'Rangers' of 150. I was one of them as an orderly Sergeant—About this [time] the enemy landed on York Island and the next day after they landed, we had a very severe battle with the enemy, which was called the 'Monday fight'—We, and brave commander Colonel who fell in the battle—He did not say 'go boys,' but, 'come boys,' and we always were ready and willing to follow him, and until he fell within six feet where I was—He begged to be moved so that the enemy should not get possession of his body—I was one who helped put him on the soldiers shoulders who carried him off—He expired in about one hour—After this we remained between the lines until late in the fall & had a great many severe scrimages with the

enemy — At length the enemy crossed at Frog's Point, and went up to White Plains, then returned back across King's Bridge & hem'd us in: we was obliged to resort to Fort Washington. The Fort was immediately given up on the 16 of November — There was nothing to be seen or heard among the soldiers but crying, swearing, and cursing that the Fort was given up, which was then nearest to N. Y. city — We was then put on board the prison ship where I remained about two months; here I saw the most barbarous, inhuman, & wicked conduct that ever could be invented by man — I saw hundreds die with hunger, a shocking death — them that lived underwent every thing but death. The *Bo'sen* [Boatswain] came down every morning with rope in hand, [unintelligible] 'is there any dead Yankees here?' if there was any so weak that they could not get off his way, they felt the rope on their backs. Our food for four days in the week each day was some oatmeal full of worms, scalded, made very thin, put into a wooden dish, about three pints for eight men; the other three days, two ounces salt beef a man with a little hard biscuit; if by chance we got a beef bone, we were rich, it was cracked & pounded; every mite was eaten. At one time we were refused fresh water for three days; a Sentinel set over the water cask, then every man drank as he pleased — A great many being so weak and thirsty, drank 'till they died — this was not for the quantity of water.

“At length came orders that we would be released by signing a parole not to take up arms until exchanged — We very readily accepted the offer, & came out about the middle of January — I got as far as Norwalk being unable to get no farther, now 40 miles to my home — My people soon heard the good news, came & carried me home — It

was four weeks before I could cross the room & six months before I could perform any kind of business."

WILLIAM STEWARD, of Col. S. H. Parsons' regiment states that "he was in the Battle of Long Island and two or three days thereafter was permitted to volunteer as one of the 'Rangers' under Colo. Knowlton from Conn, who were to range between the hostile armies. . . . He was with Colo. Knowlton when he was killed, and after his death the 'Rangers' were commanded by Capt. Holmes and Major Colburn, and he thinks part of the time by some other officer, but is not distinct in his recollection as to the name of all the officers that were in command after Col^o Knowlton's decease. While with the Rangers he was employed at Harlem, and on the 27 Oct^o 1776 he was in the Skirmish in Harlem, and commanded a company of Rangers that day. That the 16th day of November he was taken prisoner at Fort Washington, between Kings Bridge and N. Y. city, by the Hessian division of the British army, carried to N. Y. city where he remained a prisoner until Jan'y 5, 1777 when he with others was paroled and arrived at home about Feby 10 — His health was so much impaired that he was unfit for service and remained so until June — He ascribed his sickness to the extreme cruelty of the British, during his confinement on board the Prison Ship."

[Statement summarized in the Pension Bureau.]

OLIVER BURNHAM,¹ of Col. Wyllys' Regiment, Conn. states that after marching from Boston to New York "he went on to Long Island, was in the battle at Flatbush in August and returned to New York, was in the battle at Harlem Heights (Col. Knowlton then commanded and

¹ See Judge Burnham's letter on the Battle of Harlem Heights, Document No. 33.

was killed — was shot down within a yard of the subscriber), continued with the troops until about the 16th November, 1776, when he was taken prisoner at Fort Washington, put on board of a British ship (called the Dutton) & thence (being taken sick) was sent to the Hospital at the Methodist Meeting House in New York, remained there 2 or 3 weeks & then was permitted to live out of the Hospital, & remained until the middle of February 1777, when he took 'Scotch leave' and escaped, returning to his father's house in Cornwall, Conn."

[From MSS. Documents, Pension Bureau, Washington, D. C.]

No. 42

EXTRACTS FROM MSS. DIARY OF LIEUT. OLIVER BABCOCK, OF KNOWLTON'S RANGERS, KEPT WHILE PRISONER IN NEW YORK

- Nov.* 16 [1776] Fort Washington was Taken.
 17 Staid at Harlim fasting.
 18 Came to York and Lodged in ye Meeting house.
 20 Went to see the Prisoners.
 21 walked about Town.
 22 Dealt pots [rations?] to ye prisoners.
 23 Went to Mr. Volentines, Drew the officers Bots [obscure].
 24 Collected some Returns and waited for Provision — wrote 2 Letters.
 25 Drew Provision and Divided.
 26 found 2 poor Prisoners Ded in prison — Din'd at Anells (?)
 27 Drew provy'ion for 352 (?) — Rainy.

- 28 Drew Rice, peas & Butter for soldiers in y^e North Ch— and counted them.
- 29 Drew wood for the prisoners in North Church.
- 30 Drew Provision & Divided it—the Serj't. assisted me—Major Wells set out.
- Dec.* 1 Mr. James Avery came to see me—Eat broiled Turnips.
- 2 Went to Mr. Loring—get the Proclamation.
- 3 Went to fly market & Bought fish—also Bou't soap—Rainy weather.
- 4 went to Mrs. Smiths & to see Doctor holms—Drew y^e Beef—no news.
- 5 went to Mrs. goodwin's—got breakfast.
- 6 Cut wood—my part $\frac{3}{6}$.
- 7 Saw'd wood & cut—the Ships went up the River—my part $\frac{3}{4}$ L money.
- 8 Sunday went to Mrs. goodwins to Breakfast—uncle Avery came to see me—Supped on sasages at Mrs. granediers (?).
- 9 Went several times to go on Board ship—fell in Company with Col. Allen—went to Mrs. Spooners.
- 10 went on Board the Dutton & Grovner ships and carried some Cloths to the poor prisoners.
- 11 went to see Lt. Brewster—shoemaking—Mr. Stratten arriv'd.
- 12 Snowy wet weather—fetch'd a Bottle wine for Doctor holms—Began to write Coppies.
- 13 went to see the sick at the Quaker meeting house—Wilson & Vanderpool—& Bought Turnips—went with Lieut. Stratten, Capt. Gilbert.
- 14 Clear and Cold—Capt. Dewitt tells good news.

- 15 Being Sunday Drew Provisions for the Officers
& Divided it our Quarters — Clear and Cold,
heard the news that Gen^l Lee is taken.
- 16 attended Col. Clark's Funeral.
- 17 Clear and Cold: mended our fire Place — Built
a new Back.
- 18 Clear and Cold — Drew the Provisions all but
Bread — went twice after that.
- 19 had a Touse for Bread with Mr. White — had
the Bread Changed — Clear and Cold.
- 20 Snow — much Touse with Doctor Keyes having
Small Pox &c. — Din'd with Mr. Walker the
Baker, good eells & good cheese &c. — Car-
ried my shirt & frock to Mrs. Goodwin to
wash — Snowy and rainy.
- 22 Sunday clear and pleasant. . . . Old Doctor
Mix says he is going out.
- 24 Drew provision & was exchanged by Mr. Loring.
- 25 went on board the ships glasco, James Craig
master — Dined with Mrs. Cassender in Com-
pany Lieut. Stratten.
- 26 got 1 Dozen wine for y^e Sick — Rainy icy
weather — wind N. East. Bot Bread & spilt
it in the Dark.
- 27 Set sail from N. York & came up to Blackwells
point, Dropt anchor, went Longsland [L. I.]
shore & Buried 7 men.
- 28 Went up to hallets Cove — went on shore &
Buried 2 Dead.
- 29, 30, 31 Lay at Hallets Cove, wind N.E. —
went on shore — Buried the Dead — Bought
1 sheep Cost 24s 9d L. M., also 20 gallons
molasses at 3/ L. M.

- Jan.* 1, 1777 set sail — came thro' Hell gate — came to anchor about 4 miles above at the Island
- 2 Brothers — wind southerly, very heavy and rain — Drove into a Bay on Westchester shore — struck a Rock, got of safe.
- 2 Wind at N. West — sail'd to Milford [Conn.], Came to anchor in y^e Harbour about 3 o'clock.
- 3 Landed our poor sick men at Milford, &c.
[From Milford, Lieut. Babcock went, by way of New Haven and Middletown, to Hartford.]
- 7 Was admitted in to Both houses of Assembly and Related the sufferings of my poor fellow prisoners at New York.
- 8 . . . Set out from Norwich and arrived at my own house — found my family well. Oh that I may Live to honour and praise God all the days of my Life for his great Deliverance in Bringing me from under the Iron Rod of my enemies from the Land of Tyranny and Bondage: that he has kept me from falling a sacrifice to their vengeance.
- I am delivered from Captivity. O Bless the Lord O my Soul and let his Name be Praised for ever.

[From Original MSS. in Pension Bureau, Washington, D. C.]

Lieutenant Babcock had contracted the small-pox in New York and died at his home, January 24, 1777. Two of his children soon after died of the same disease.

No. 43

SIR WILLIAM HOWE TO LORD GERMAIN

HEAD QUARTERS, YORK ISLAND, Sept. 21, 1776.

My Lord

I have the satisfaction to inform your Lordship of his Majesty's troops being in possession of the city of New York.

Upon the rebels abandoning their lines at Brooklyn, the King's army moved from Bedford, leaving Lieut. Gen. Heister encamped upon the Heights of Brooklyn with two Brigades of Hessians, and one Brigade of British at Bedford, and took five positions in the neighbourhood of Newtown, Bushwick, Hell Gate, and Flushing.

The two islands of Montresor and Buchannan were occupied, and batteries raised against the enemy's work at Horne's Hook, commanding the passage at Hell Gate.

On the 15th inst. in the morning three ships of war passed up the North River as far as Bloomingdale, to draw the enemy's attention to that side; and the first division of troops consisting of the light infantry, the British reserve, the Hessian grenadiers and chasseurs, under the command of Lieut. Gen. Clinton, having with him Lieut. Gen. Earl Cornwallis, Major Gen. Vaughan, Brig. Gen. Leslie, and Colonel Donop, embarked at the head of New Town Creek, and landed about noon upon New York Island, three miles from the town, at a place called Kepp's Bay, under the fire of two forty gun ships and three frigates, viz. Phoenix, Roebuck, Orpheus, Carysfort, and Rose, Commodore Hotham having the direction of the ships and boats.

The rebels had troops in their works round Kepp's Bay; but their attention being engaged in expectation of the

King's troops landing at Stuyvesant's Cove, Horen's Hook, and at Harlem, which they had reason to conclude, Kepp's Bay became only a secondary object of their care. The fire of the shipping being so well directed and so incessant, the enemy could not remain in their works, and the descent was made without the least opposition. The conduct of the officers of the navy do them much honor; and the behaviour of the seamen belonging to the ships of war and transports employed to row the boats, was highly meritorious. Much praise in particular is due to the masters and men of six transports, that passed the town on the evening of the 14th under a heavy fire, being volunteers, to take troops on board for the more speedy disembarkation of the second division.

The British immediately took post upon the commanding height of Inclenberg, and the Hessians moving towards New York, fell in with a body of the rebels that were retiring from Stuyvesant's Cove, some firing ensued, by which a Brigadier General, other officers, and several men of the rebels were killed and wounded, with the loss of four men killed, and eight wounded on the part of the Hessians. As soon as the second embarkation was landed, the troops advanced towards a corps of the enemy upon a rising ground three miles from Inclenberg, towards Kings-bridge, having McGowan's pass in their rear, upon which they immediately retired to the main body of their army upon Morris's Height. The enemy having evacuated New York soon after the army landed, a brigade took possession of the works in the evening. The prisoners made in the course of this day were about 20 officers and 300 men.

The position the King's army took, on the 15th in the evening, was with the right to Horen's Hook, and the

left at the North River near to Bloomingdale ; the rebel army occupying the ground with extensive works on both sides of King's bridge, and a redoubt with cannon upon a height on the west side of the North River opposite to the Blue Bell, where the enemy have their principal work ; in which positions both armies still continue.

On the 16th in the morning a large party of the enemy having passed under cover of the woods near to the advanced posts of the army by way of Vanderwater's Height, the 2^d and 3^d battalions of light infantry, supported by the 42nd regiment pushed forward, and drove them back to their entrenchments, from whence the enemy observing they were not in force, attacked them with near 3000 men, which occasioned the march of the reserve with two field pieces, a battalion of Hessian grenadiers and a company of chasseurs, to prevent the corps engaged from being surrounded ; but the light infantry and 42nd regiment with the assistance of the chasseurs and field pieces repulsed the enemy with considerable loss, and obliged them to retire within their works. The enemy's loss is not ascertained ; but from the accounts of deserters it is agreed, that they had not less than 300 killed and wounded, and among them a colonel and a major killed. We had eight officers wounded most of them very slightly ; fourteen men killed and about 70 wounded.

Maj. Gen. Vaughan was slightly wounded in the thigh on the 15th by a random shot, as he was ascending the heights of Inclenberg with the grenadiers ; and I have the pleasure of informing your Lordship that Lieut. Col. Monckton is so well recovered, he has been walking about some days.

[Upcott Collection, IV., 410, N. Y. Historical Society. Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 44

FROM STEWART'S SKETCHES OF THE HIGHLANDERS

After the escape of the enemy, active operations were resumed on the 15th of September; and the reserve, which the Royal Highlanders had rejoined after the action at Brooklyn, crossed over the island to New York, three miles above the town, and, after some opposition, took post on the heights. The landing being completed, the Highlanders and Hessians, who were ordered to advance to Bloomingdale, to intercept the enemy, now retreating from New York, fell in with and captured a corps of New England men and Virginians. That night the regiment lay on their arms, occasionally skirmishing with the enemy. On the 16th the light infantry were sent out to dislodge a party of the enemy, which had taken possession of a wood facing the left of the British. The action becoming warm towards the evening, and the enemy pushing on reinforcements, the Highlanders were sent to support the light infantry, when the Americans were quickly driven back to their entrenchments. Perceiving that our force was small, they returned to the attack with 3000 men; but these were likewise repulsed, with considerable loss. In this affair our loss was 14 killed, and 5 officers and 70 men wounded.

[Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 45

FROM HISTORICAL RECORD OF THE FORTY-SECOND, OR
THE ROYAL HIGHLAND, REGIMENT OF FOOT

Having completed the capture of Long Island, the army crossed the river in the middle of September; the

Royal Highlanders being with the leading division, landed above New York, and made a movement towards Bloomingdale, to intercept the retreating Americans, when a corps of Virginians and New England men were captured. The Highlanders passed the night under arms, occasionally skirmishing with the enemy; and the commanding officer Major William Murray, narrowly escaped being made prisoner. He was passing from the light infantry battalion, to the regiment, and was beset by an American officer and two soldiers, whom he kept at bay some time, but they eventually closed upon him and threw him down; he was a stout man of great strength of arm, and he wrenched the sword out of the American officer's hand, and made so good use of it that his antagonists fled, before several men of the regiment, who heard the noise, could come to his assistance.

On the following day the regiment was ordered to support the light infantry engaged in a wood, and took part in driving a numerous body of Americans to their intrenchments. The enemy renewed the conflict with augmented numbers, and sustained another repulse with a severe loss in killed and wounded. This being only an affair of out-posts, no detailed account of it was given; but it was a well-contested action. The Forty-second had one serjeant and three rank and file killed; Captains Duncan McPherson and John McIntosh, Ensign Alexander McKenzie (who died of his wounds), three serjeants, one piper, two drummers, 47 rank and file wounded.

[Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 46

CAPT. GEORGE HARRIS OF THE FIFTH BRITISH REGIMENT
TO HIS UNCLE¹

After landing in York Island, we drove the Americans into their works beyond the eight mile-stone from New York, and thus got possession of the best half of the island. We took post opposite to them, placed our picquets, borrowed a sheep, killed, cooked, and ate some of it and then went up to sleep on a gate, which we took the liberty of throwing off its hinges, covering our feet with an American tent, for which we should have cut poles and pitched, had it not been so dark.

The 16th of September we were ordered to stand to our arms at eleven A.M. and were instantly trotted about three miles (without a halt to draw breath), to support a battalion of light infantry, which had imprudently advanced so far without support as to be in great danger of being cut off. This must have happened, but for our haste. So dangerous a quality is courage without prudence for its guide; with it, how noble and respectable it makes the man. But to return to our narrative. The instant the front of our columns appeared, the enemy began to retire to their works, and our light infantry to the camp. On our return we were exposed to the fire of the Americans. A man in my company had his hat shot through nearly in the direction of my wound, but the ball merely raised the skin; and in the battalion on our left a man was shot so dead when lying on the ground, that the

¹ Capt. Harris was now serving with the Grenadiers. The Fifth Regt. was not engaged at Harlem Heights.

next man did not perceive it, but when he got up to stand to his arms, kicked his comrade, thinking he was asleep, and then found, to his great surprise, that he was quite dead, a ball having entered under the ear, and very little blood having issued from it.

Before we started in the morning, our dinner, consisting of a goose and piece of mutton, had been put on the fire. The moment we marched, our domestic deposited the above named delicacies on a chaise, and followed us with it to our ground. When the fight was over, he again hung the goose to the fire, but the poor bird had been scarcely half done, when we were ordered to return to our station. There again we commenced cooking, and though without dish, plate, or knife did ample justice to our fare, which we washed down with bad rum and water, and then composed ourselves to rest on our friendly gate. Our baggage joined us the next day.

[Lushington's Life of Lord Harris, p. 78.]

No. 47

FROM STEDMAN'S HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN WAR

On the morning of the 16th September, a detachment was sent out from the main body of the Americans to a wood facing the left flank of the English army. Three companies of our light infantry were dispatched to dislodge them. The enemy, with a seeming intention of retreating to the main body, retired into the interior parts of the wood, where they were reinforced by another detachment; which made it necessary that the remainder of the light infantry, with the 42nd regiment, should be sent to

support the companies that were engaged. The action was carried on by reinforcements on both sides, and became very warm. The enemy, however, possessed a great advantage from the circumstance of engaging within half a mile of their intrenched camp, whence they could be supplied with fresh troops as often as occasion required. Victory, nevertheless, was on the part of the loyalists; and the Americans retreated with the loss of three hundred killed and wounded.

No. 48

GENERAL HOWE'S ORDERS AS GIVEN IN ORDERLY BOOK
OF THE BRIGADE OF GUARDSHEAD QU^{RS}. NEW YORK ISLAND, 17th Sept^r. 1776.

Parole Blaney.

Countersign Marlborough.

A return of killed wounded and missing on the 15th & 16th Ins^t to be given in to-morrow at orderly Time distinguishing the loss of each day.

The Com^d in Chief entertains the highest opinion of the Bravery of the few troops that yesterday beat back a verry superior Body of the Rebels, and he desires to return Thanks to the Battⁿ and to the Officers and Men of the Artillery that came to their support, with that expedition which so strongly marks the prevailing spirit in the Army, and which properly tempered must always insure Success to his Majesty's arms. But at the same time he finds himself under a necessity of disapproving want of attention in the Light Companies pursuing the Rebels without that proper Discretion to be observed when there is not troops to support.

Orders. Sept. 21st, 1776.

. . . The Hessian Chasseurs being by accident omitted in the thanks of the 17th, the Gen'l is happy to take the earliest opportunity of acknowledging their alertness & of thanking them for their great readiness to support the Light Infantry.

[From MSS. Orderly Book, in N. Y. Historical Society Library.]

No. 49

LETTER FROM NEW YORK, DATED SEPTEMBER 23^d, 1776

The army landed on the 15th of Sept. at the house of Mr. Foxcroft, Postmaster General, in Kip's Bay. The troops immediately took possession of the house of Mr. Robert Murray, the Quaker's House on Inkling Barrack, a very strong point. Mr. Washington's men were driven from the posts they possessed as far as the Hill, with a Hollow way on its right, about 3 miles short of Mount Morris [161st St.] at which place and near the Blue Bell [Fort Washington], which is three miles from King's Bridge, they are strongly posted. Gen. Howe's Head Quarters are at Lt. Col. James Beekman's House on the East River near Turtle Bay. His troops are throwing up intrenchments from Jacob Walton's country seat at Horn's Hook at Hell Gate across the whole Island to Humphrey Jones House on the North River.

[From the St. James Chronicle, London, Nov. 16, 1776.]

No. 50

JOURNAL OF LIEUTENANT-COLONEL STEPHEN KEMBLE,
DEPUTY-ADJUTANT-GENERAL BRITISH FORCES

Sunday, Sept. 15th [1776]. About 9 in the Morning the Reserve, 33d and 42d Regiments excluded, embarked in Flat Boats in Newtown Creek. The rest of the Army marched to the point of Land opposite to Kipp's Bay and embarked there, the 1st Brigade and 71st excepted, who were left at Hell Gate. About 12 the whole first Landing pulled to the Shore, consisting of the Reserve and Donop's Corps, covered by two 40 Gun Ships and three Frigates, whose fire was both terrible and pleasing, and so terrible to the Rebels that they dare not come within half a Mile of the Shore instead of defending their Lines on the Shore. As we were going on Shore we saw a party of about 500 hundred Rebels, who were marching in great haste to take possession of their Works in the Rear of Stuyvesant's House; suppose them to be the People that afterwards fell in with the Hessians. The Light Infantry landed upon the Right of the Bay, got up a Rock, the Grenadiers, &c, in it; the Light Infantry took possession of the Post on their Right; the Grenadiers, 33d and 42d Marched thro' to Inclenberg Hill, and the Hessians of the left, where they met with a party of the Rebels, of whom they Killed 30 or 40 and took about 60 Prisoners. The Grenadiers met with a small party and exchanged a few shot, Maj. Gen. Vaughan the only person Wounded and that Slightly. Our loss the whole day about 3 killed and 16 or 18 wounded. The advance of our Army Marched to the Black Horse, and across from thence by Apthorp's House to North River, and had very near cut off Mr. Putnam's

Retreat, who brought off the Rebel Rear Guard from New York, most of whom and their Troops in general got off by the North River Road.

On a Survey of their Works the Day after, find the whole Coast from Kipp's Bay to New York on the East River, and from New York to Little Bloomingdale [near Greenwich] on the North River, fortified with a Line of Entrenchment, except where the Marshes obstructed it, with a Chain of Redoubts and Works from [Judge] Jones's House, across the Island to Lespenard's and Mortimer's [Mortier's] House by Bayard's Mount on which they have a Fort called Bunker's Hill, the only Work of any Consequence or strength on the Island, and tolerably well finished. It is made of Sod. All the rest of Works (which are innumerable) appear calculated more to amuse than for use.

Monday, Sept. 16th. In the morning a Party of the Enemy showed themselves at Jones's House; were inconsiderately pursued by two Companies of Light Infantry who Engaged and drove a very Superior Body to a great distance, supported by 42d Regiment and some Light Infantry; were fired at from a Breast work, and it not being thought proper to support them, were ordered to Retreat. 1 Serjeant and 13 Privates Killed; 2 Majors, 2 Captains, 7 Subalterns, 5 Serjeants, 3 Drummers, and 138 [Privates] Wounded. This day took possession of New York, found some Flour and other Stores of no great Consequence, with some Cannon in their Redoubts, but those of little use to us.

General Robertson Ordered to take the Command in Town.

["Kemble Papers," Collections N. Y. Historical Society (1883),
Vol. I., p. 88.]

No. 51

LETTER FROM CAPTAIN WILLIAM G. EVELYN OF THE
BRITISH LIGHT INFANTRY, TO HIS AUNT, MRS. BOS-
COWEN, ENGLAND, DATED NEW YORK ISLAND, SEP-
TEMBER 24, 1776

* * * * *

From the time of our driving the rebels out of Long Island, they daily expected an attack upon York, and had so strengthened themselves with batteries and breastworks, that they looked upon a landing as impracticable. By the disposition General Howe had made of the troops, they were deceived as to the place where he intended to make the attack. On the night of the 14th, the boats were sent quickly up the river to a creek, opposite of which five men-of-war were stationed. We marched at the same time, and embarked in the morning. We rowed a considerable way up the river, higher than where we were to land, and made fast the boats to some transports till the whole should come up, by which the rebels were deceived, and drew themselves up in their works to receive us. On a certain signal we all pushed off together, and at the same instant the men-of-war began such a fire as nothing could withstand. The Light Infantry, in the headmost boats, gained a high and steep rock, which they ascended and secured a safe landing for the rest of the troops [at Kip's Bay]. They were followed by the Grenadiers, Hessians and Artillery, and afterwards by the body of the army. The rebels, upon the firing of the ships (which is not to be described), and upon seeing the troops gain the shore, fled in the greatest confusion. Their garrisons in New York abandoned it with the utmost precipitation,

leaving their forts, their cannon, and a quantity of military stores, and that evening a brigade of ours took possession of the town.

We advanced two or three miles, the rebels retiring before us, till they left us the ground which the General wished to occupy, which is a strong pass between the north and east rivers, about seven miles from New York [McGowan's Pass]. The rebels are on the opposite hills, and extend from thence to Kingsbridge, burying themselves in entrenchments, in which they place their only security. The taking of the island and town of New York without any loss, though above fifty thousand men were prepared to defend them, must be considered as a consummate piece of generalship; and the execution of it, between the amazing fire from the shipping, the confusion and the dismay of the rebels, the Light Infantry clambering up the steep and just accessible rocks, the water covered with boats full of armed men pressing eagerly towards the shore, was certainly one of the grandest and most sublime scenes ever exhibited. This easy victory was not sufficient to satisfy the eagerness and impetuosity of our men.

The next day [the 16th], a few companies of Light Infantry were prompted to attack a party of the rebels, and with more ardour than discretion, pushed them to their very lines, where they were supported by their cannon, and by three or four thousand men. This obliged us to support our people and brought on a skirmish, in which we had nine or ten men killed, a few officers and about ninety men wounded, and [which] answered no other end than to prove our superiority even in their beloved woods, as the ground we gained we did not want, but went back at night to that we had left in the morning.

CAPTAIN EVELYN TO HIS MOTHER, SEPT. 25TH, 1776

* * * * *

Since my last letter to you, we have had an action with the rebels, in which we totally defeated them, with great loss on their parts and very little on ours, and drove them entirely off Long Island. The part of the army in which I am was chiefly engaged. I was lucky enough to come off unhurt, but had six of my men killed and wounded. Those who escaped of the rebels retired to New York. On the 15th of this month, we attacked that island in our boats; and notwithstanding they expected our coming, we landed under cover of the men-of-war, without losing a man, drove the rebels in great confusion to the further end of the island, and now keep possession of York and the country seven miles from it.

[From "The Evelyns in America," edited by G. D. Scull. Printed for private circulation by Parker and Co., Oxford, England, 1881.]¹

 No. 52

VICE-ADMIRAL EARL HOWE TO MR. STEVENS. DATED
"EAGLE," NEW YORK RIVER, SEPTEMBER 18, 1776

I have the satisfaction of being able to inform their Lordships that a disposition having been made for landing the army on York Island, on the morning of the 15th, the Captains Parker and Wallace, whose abilities and distinguished resolution point them out for the most impor-

¹ In the same work, p. 321, there is this item in the journal of a British Officer: "*Sept. 16th* — This day there was a smart action near Bloomingdale, in which the Light Infantry suffered; but, on being supported by the reserve, under the Honble. Major-General Vaughan, the rebels were defeated with great loss."

tant services, with the Captains Fanshaw, Hamond and Hudson, officers of great merit, passed the fire of the town of New York with their ships on the evening of the 13th, to wait off Bushwyck Creek, opposite to Kepp's Bay, where the landing was proposed to be forced in the East River. . . .

The pilots declining, on account of the strength of the tide, to take charge of the particular covering ships that were intended to be placed towards Hell-Gate for countenancing the appearance of a descent on that part of the coast, all were placed in the Kepp's Bay on the morning of the 15th, and having, by the effect of their well-directed fire, compelled the Rebels to quit their entrenchments upon the shore, the debarkation was made without further opposition. . . .

In order to facilitate the operations of the army in the East River, another detachment of the ships of war was appointed by the General's desire, to proceed up the North River to give jealousy to the enemy on this side. The *Renoun*, Captain Banks, with the Captains Davis and Wilkinson in the *Repulse* and *Pearl*, were ordered for that purpose. They passed the enemy's battery without material injury early on the 15th, to a station about six miles to the northward of the town. On the ensuing night the enemy directed four fire-vessels in succession against them, but with no other effect than of obliging the ships to move their stations, the *Repulse* excepted. The *Renoun* returned on this side the town, but the two frigates remain still in the North River, with the *Tryal* armed schooner, to strengthen the left flank of the army, extending to the western shore of York Island, as circumstances will admit.

[From Force's American Archives, Fifth Series, Vol. II., pp. 379-380.]

No. 53

LETTERS FROM CAPTAIN FRANCIS HUTCHESON, ASSISTANT
SECRETARY TO SIR WILLIAM HOWE, TO A FRIEND IN
ENGLAND ¹

CAMP AT THE WATERING PLACE ON STATTON ISLAND,
July 10, 1776.

Dear Sir,

I wrote you by the Packet that sailed on the 10th of last month, the day we sailed from Halifax, and have now the pleasure to acquaint you of the safe arrival of the fleet at Sandy Hook the 29th Ins^t after an agreeable passage of 19 days. We found Governor Tryon at the Hook on board the *Dutches of Gordon*; he has with him Mr. Barrow, Mr. Kemp, Oliver Delancy, Mr. Apthorp & Major Beyard. The three last Gentleman made their escape in a Cannoe from Apthorp's house to the Assia lying below the Nar-row, about ten nights ago. Hugh & Alex^t Wallace are hiding on Long Island, and Billy Bayard in Orange County. Captain Kennedy is at his house at Second River and every hour threatened with destruction. H. Wallace was taken up about three Weeks ago & brought before the commity on Long Island, from whom he found means to procure his discharge, otherwise he wou'd have been imprisoned. Mr. Prevost remains quiet at his house in the Jerseys; the Governor & people here are surprised how he finds means to do it. I wish he had come off with other people. New York is deserted by all the inhabitants who are friends to Government, and it is now in possession of Washington & Lord Sterling at the head of about ten thousand Connecticut & New England Rebels; they have

¹ This friend was doubtless Mr. John Mortier, as he speaks of his house at "Richmond Hill."

fortified the town & all the hights on Long Island opposite to it. The fleet came up from the Hook opposite to the little town of New Utrick in Gravesend Bay on Long Island the first Ins^t where a landing was intended but from a want of waters on the Island & the length of the March from thence to town it was (I believe) thought better to proceed through the Narrows and land on this Island, which was effected in the evening of the 2nd Ins^t without the least opposition. A few Riffle men made their escape on our aproach, and all the inhabitants have since come in to us and shew the Greatest Satisfaction on our Arrival, which has relieved them from the most horrid oprestion that can be conceived. The few Rebels that were on this Island displayed at the hights in the Narrows the Continental Collours, which made us believe they had a good Battery on that Commanding Ground, but on our aproach, the Colours were pulled down, and the trifling brestwork that was thrown up we found deserted; its immaising they did not fortify the Narrows, which would have anoyed us greatly; they fired a few shot on some of the ships as they came through from the Long Island side without doing any mischieff. The Army is now all landed and Cantooned all round the Island. The Head Q^{rs} is on the Road to lizabeth town [at] the House a M^r Hicks formerly lived in, but lately occupied by a M^r Banker of New York, who was a member of the Provincial Congress; he is treated to a Q^r on board one of the men of war, and General Howe has taken care to give orders for his Reception. Lord Percy commands the Troops in the center of the Island; his Head Q^{rs} at Richmond. Gen^l Robertson with the first Brigade from the Landing along the Road to the Dutch church. General Picket with the second at the blazing star. Gen^l Jones

with the 3^d from the Dutch church to Eliz^h ferry. Gen^l Grant with the forth Brigade on the road to Amboy. Brigadier Smith with the fifth Brigade, from the landing at the Watering place to the Narrows, and Brigadier Agnew with the fth Brigade at Billop's ferry opposite to the tower of Amboy. Brigad^r Cleaveland with the Artillery and broken Corps at and about the Watering place, near which I am incamped with the people employed in the D^r Q^r M^r General's Department; Sherreff is with the General at Head Q^{rs}. It is said our Army will remain in their present Cantoontment, untill the arrival of the Fleet from Europe under Lord Howe, which is hourly expected. The New Yorkers who are friends to Government are very apprehensive the New England men will set fire to the town, as soon as they find they can no longer keep possession of it. M^r Dogab [?] the once favorite at New York, is now in disgrace among them, and Donald Campbell was last week tried at Philadelphia by a Gen^l Court Martial for his conduct in Canada; he is dismissed from his Dep^r Q^r M^r Generals Appointment & Rank of Colonel in the Rebel Army, and is as much despised by them now, as he is by us.

General Washington has taken up his Summer Quarters at your house on Richmond Hill; his town Residence is General Robertsons, on the top of which they display the Continental Colours. Governor Franklin is made prisoner in his house at Amboy; we are told there are thousands in the Jerseys will join us as soon as we get footing in that Province; several partys have come over to us since our landing from Amboy and Schrosbury, with Capt. Stephenson lat^e of our Regiment, and Lieut^t Morris late of the 47^h Reg^t on half pay.

* * * * *

I have just now come from dining with Governor Tryon at Robertson's, where I met Barrow and all the Refugees. Barrow desires I will present you his best respects, they all remember you with great Regard; he tells me its his opinion that nine out of the 13 Provinces will declare for Government before the last day of November.

CAMP AT THE WATERING PLACE ON STATTON ISLAND,

July 28, 1776.

Dear Sir,

I wrote you the 8th [10th ?] of this month by Col. Blunt who sailed in the Packet with the Generals dispatches, and I now take the oppertunity of a ship to Ireland to inclose you a copy of Lord Howe's declaration which he published on his arrival the 12th Ins^t. Just as he was coming thro' the Narrows, the ships was firing on, & passing New York. Little material has passed since; numbers of people come every night from the Jerseys & Long Island, who tell us there were great discontents at the declaration of independance and that great numbers will join us at our geting footing at New York, Long Island, or the Jerseys, when they can get tons without Risque of being taken in the attempt. As I could not get the last New York Newspaper to send you, inclosed you have some extracts from it, which will shew you the lengths they have gone and what they have long aimed at.

NEW UTRECHT, LONG ISLAND

August 26, 1776.

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to acquaint you that our Army landed on this Island in Gravesend Bay the 23^d Inst^t without any opposition. The Light Infantry, Granidiers, & Donops Corps of Hessians & Highland Brigade took

port that evening at Flat Bush where General Clinton commands; the Head Q^r was at the same time established here. We have now possession of all this part of the Island, from Denice's House at the Narrows, to Graves End Church; the Hessian jaegers & our Light Infantry have had some skermeshing with the Rebels, who make their appearance at the Edge of the Wood, which you know runs across the Road between Mr. Axtel's House & the ferry; the Rebels have burnt several Houses & all the corn on the scerts of the Wood. Several of the New York principal men who have been some time hiding have got to us, particularly Mr. Axtel & Beach. The Army will, I believe, move tomorrow, more towards the middle of the Island, when I hope more of the Inhabitants will join us; there is not one hundred as yet, nor have we been able to collect as many Waggon with Horses, which you know is not more than one-fifth of what is necessary to move this Army. The fatigue I am obliged to go through is beyond conception but I will see it out. I write this Letter in expectation of an opportunity of sending it.

CAMP AT TURTLE BAY NEAR NEW YORK,

Sept. 24, 1776.

Dear Sir,

On Sunday the 15th Inst^d the Army landed at Kipsis Bay from the opposite shore on Long Island, under the fire of four Men of War, and tho' the Rebels made a shew for some time of maning their extensive Works, they soon abandoned the whole, and fled to the Hights near the Blewbell above Harlem, where they have made some strong works, and still remain; our advanced post is at the Black Horse tavern and the Army is posted from the North to the East Rivers quite across the Country above Mr. Apthorps. We had but 4 kill'd & 14 wounded

of the Hessian troops in this great success, but the next day (the 16th) the Light Infantry advancing a little too far, were attacked by a large body by which we lost 9 Kill'd & about 70 Wounded; however they kept their ground till supported by the Granidiers and brought of all their wounded, killed 60 of the Rebels, and took about 51 Prisoners — We immediately took possession of New York and all their Works which are numerous beyond description. On the 21st at Night some Hellish Villians set fire to the town near the White Hall Slip; the wind blowing hard drove the flames with such Rapidity that nothing could stop it, all that part of the town where Mr. Watts House stood, with the houses in Broadway & West side of Broad Street and all the North River as far as Vaux Hall is consumed. Kennedys, Halletts, Col. Reeds & two or three Houses joining are all that escaped as far as St. Pauls Church. What adds to the misfortune, they are chiefly the friends to government who have suffered; several of the Villians have been detected, & have suffered the fate they deserve. I am sorry to acquaint you that your furniture left at Richmond Hill was not sold. M^r Washington lived in the house all Summer and made use of it; some of the tables & chairs he had in Gen^l Robertson's house & was consumed in it, and on the Night before we landed he quited Richmond hill, left it open, & the Rebels in their retreat, took many things out of it, and broke all the glasses. As soon as I could, I got a safe guard to it, which still remains, and everything left will be safe, a return of which I will send you & will dispose of the whole the best for your advantage. Both the Wallises are prisoners, & M^{rs} Wallace tells me they have the list of all was left in the house.

[From the Haldiman MSS., British Museum.]

No. 54

FROM THE JOURNAL OF CAPT. JOHN MONTRESOR, ENGINEER AND AID TO HOWE

The 16th Sept., 1776, the action on Vandewater's Height, near Harlaem, on New York Island, I procured two 3 Pounders, Brass, with Lt: Wallace, Royal Artillery. No horses being near McGowns's, where the Guns were, had them hauled by hand, and brought into action to face the Enemy, who were attempting to cut off our Left, and getting round us between our Left and Hudson's River. The proposal was my own, and had its desired effect, no other Guns being in the Field, and 60 rounds from each were fired.

[Collections of the N. Y. Historical Society, 1881, p. 121.]

No. 55

EXTRACTS FROM ORDER BOOK OF BRITISH GUARDS, 1776

- Sept.* 20. All the fascines and pickets to be carried to Jones's house near the North River and to Major Musgroves advanced post to the left of McGowan's House.
21. A working party of 400 men will parade to morrow and march to McGowans House
 23. All remaining fascines to be sent to Jones' House
 24. The working party at McGowan's Hill to consist of 200 men only until further orders
 25. The working party at McGowans Hill will consist of 100 men only till further orders.

- Sept.* 28. A working party of 100 men to parade at day-break on the Road to the right of Jones's House
30. 50 more men to be added to the working party to the right of Jones's House
- Oct.* 2. 100 facines with pickets to be sent as soon as possible to the Rock Redoubt on the Right of Jones's House
4. A Corporal & 6 men to be posted this evening at gun firing by Capt. Emerick at the North River Shore near Little Bloomingdale to allow no boats to ply without a proper pass; a guide will conduct the relief in the morning
6. 50 men only to work at Jones's House
11. Lieut Gen. Earl Percy is to command on N. Y. Island & parts adjacent.¹

[MSS. Book, N. Y. Historical Society.]

No. 56

HESSIAN ACCOUNT OF THE ACTION

On the 16th of September quite a brisk fight took place on York Island. The Americans on the morning of this

¹ From the Mag. of Am. History, 1882:

"This is to certify that the Regiment Prince Hereditary of Hessian consisting of one Collonel, one Major, Two Capitains, Fifteen Subalterns and five hundred ninty two Rank and file, included artillerie, Encamped at Bloumendall & the Estate of Mr Jones the 21 day of September 1776 and there furnished whit firewood from the same Estate to the 5 day of Decemb following

B LUDEWIG
Lfⁿ. Mⁿ. Major

VON HACKENBERG
Colonel"

day sent from their camp a strong detachment which came out of the wood and attacked our left wing. The second and third regiments of Light Infantry supported by the 42d Regiment (Highlanders) moved out and drove the enemy back into their entrenchments. The latter did this intentionally to entice the pursuers deeper into the wood where a stronger division was already concealed for their support, computed at three thousand men. Gen. Leslie, who was in command of the British, soon encountered a severe resistance. Col. von Donop as well as the British Regiments next in line to him received orders to move up to their support; the former moved up with his Yagers and the Grenadier battalion of Linsingen, while he sent off the two other grenadier battalions of von Block and von Minnigerode to occupy the defile on the road to King's Bridge.

The Yagers who swarmed forward soon came into a hot contest on Hoyland's Hill — when, however, the Linsingen battalion moved up to their support the Americans retired. The Yagers had eight wounded, among them Lt. Heinrichs. The Yagers and the battalions of Grenadiers bivouacked in the wood not far from Bloomingdale, and when the next morning the two other grenadier battalions came up to Donop with his brigade encamped here. The Hessians here helped the British out of the mire. Donop, usually so modest, says in his report to General von Heister:

“But for my Yagers, two Regiments of Highlanders and the British infantry would have all, perhaps, been captured, for they were attacked by a force four times their number; and Gen. Leslie had made a great blunder in sending these brave fellows so far in advance in the woods without support.”

On this occasion Capt^e Wredon and Lorey especially distinguished themselves — the former went twenty paces in advance of the Yagers in the firing line, and the latter shot down the leader of the hostile battalion, upon which they turned their backs and fled.

The enemy lost about three hundred killed and wounded, among whom were Colonel Knowlton and Major Leitch both of whom died soon after of their wounds. Our loss amounted to 14 dead and 78 wounded — among the latter, 7 English officers.¹

[Translated from *Die deutschen Hülfsstruppen im nordamerikanischen Befreiungskriege, 1776 bis 1783*. Von Max von Elking, corresponding member N. Y. Historical Society. Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 57

FROM REPORT OF MAJOR C. L. BAURMEISTER

IN DETACHED CAMP NEAR HELL GATE
24 Sept. 1776.

On the 16th (Sept) the enemy encamped before Fort Washington in pretty good order; the left wing extending to Harlem. From Fort Washington an entrenchment to King's Bridge, by which they secured a further retreat under the protection of the said fort. The English Light Infantry advanced too quickly on the retreat of the enemy and at Bruckland Hill fell into an ambuscade of four thousand men, and if the Grenadiers and especially the Hessian Yagers had not arrived in time to help them no one of these brave Light Infantry would have escaped. They lost 70 dead and 200 wounded — the enemy must

¹ From the Journal of General von Heister and the Diary of Captain von Walzburg.

have lost very severely, because no Yager had any ammunition left, and all the Highlanders had fired their last shot. A lieutenant of the Yagers, Henrichs, was wounded in the left side and also four Yagers. By the Parole of the 17th Genl. Howe, noticing his satisfaction on the happy landing, found it necessary to recommend the corps under the command of General Leslie to be not only brave but more prudent. The British at Bloomingdale encamped in two lines. Some of the enemy's baggage and wagons with flour were taken.

[From original MSS. in possession of the late Hon. George Bancroft.
Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 58

LIEUT. JOHN HEINRICHS TO A. L. SCHLOZER

NEW YORK ISLAND, in the district of Harlem, 5 English miles from the City of New York, and 100 yards from Hornhogk on the East River, Sept. 18, 1776.

Last Sunday (Sept 15) we landed under the thundering rattle of 5 men-of-war, in flat boats from Long Island, on New York Island, about 4 miles from New York city. As skirmishers we usually formed the advance-guard, etc. Briefly; in the afternoon this part of the island was ours. But just as we were about going into quarters, the rebels caused a new alarm, and we were obliged to turn out. I had the right wing of the out-post; we marched towards King's Bridge, consequently I came close on the East River, which is lined with the finest houses. I had the pleasure of taking possession of all these houses, together with the hostile battery, where I found 5 cannons; the rebels all fled. All the houses were crammed with furniture, rural riches, and

jewels; the people however had all fled, and left their slaves behind. But the next day one proprietor after another came back and joyful tears of gratitude rolled down the faces of these formerly happy people, when they found again their houses, fruits, cattle, and all their furniture, and heard from one that I had merely taken possession for them, and delivered their property back to their hands.

The next day the rebels 4000 men strong advanced against our out-posts, and we sustained a severe fire, until towards the afternoon, when they were driven away, as I afterwards heard; for at one o'clock I was compelled to withdraw, as I was shot by a rifle-ball in the left side of the breast 4 fingers distant from the heart. To whom could I more safely go, and who would receive me in a more friendly manner than they who had but yesterday called me their benefactor, their preserver? As I do not like noise, now still less than ever; I selected for myself, although I could have chosen palaces, a small house on the East River, to which the widow of a New York preacher, Oglyby, had fled with a numerous family of children and step-children. Not far distant was the house or rather the palace of her old father, who had a storehouse full of porcelain, wine, and brandy, but had lost nothing from it.

All these people came back last evening; and the emotion I felt on seeing mother and children, grandfather and grandchildren, &c. down to the black children of the slaves, hugging and kissing each other, so affected my wound, that I got a fever in the night. Not to be thought of are the flatteries the good people showered on me which I did not deserve, as I acted only according to orders.

[Translated from Schlözer's Briefwechsel meist historischen und politischen Inhalts, Vol. II., Part vii., p. 99. Jay Pamphlet.]

No. 59

EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL OF THE HESSIAN SOLDIER,
JOHN REUBER, BELONGING TO RALL'S GRENADIER
REGIMENT IN 1776

* * * * *

26. *October*, the second Division under command of General Von Kniphausen with his fleet, arrived before New York, and landed and marched to Kingsbridge into camp. These were: 1. a cavalry Yäger corps, 2. a detached Grenadier Bataillon, 3. the Wutginau Regiment, 4. the Benning Rgmt. 5. the Wissenbach, 6. the Huyne, 7. the Stein, 8. the Bünan Regm't. —

4. *Novbr.*, Rall's brigade marched to Kings bridge into camp near the Hessen regm'ts, which had just come from Hesse, and we 3 rgm'ts. (s. above) pitched our camp also here, in the night, and lay still, waiting for Fort Washington to be taken, which is not yet. —

15. *Novbr.*, came the order from the Headquarters of the English General-field-marshal Clinton, that Fort Washington should be captured by 4 attacks: 3 by the English and one by the Hessians. 1. General Matthews, 2. Col-lieutnant Stirling, 3. Lord Percy, 4. General Von Kniphausen, near whom Col. Rall with his brigade had the avantgarde on the North-port, where the ship of war lies and is to protect the flank; another ship of war lay at the South-haven and is to protect the English flank, when the thing comes off.

17. *Novbr.*, in the morning before day-break, all the regiments and corps were assembled, the Hessians on the right wing at the north-haven; the English troops upon the left wing at the south-haven. When it was now day

and the Americans perceived us, but nothing more very plainly, at once, these two ships of war, on both sides, made their master-strokes upon the fort, and we began at the same time on the land with cannon, and all the regiments marched forward up the hill and were obliged to creep along up the rocks, one falling down alive, another being shot dead. We were obliged to drag ourselves by the beech-tree bushes up the height where we could not really stand. At last, however, we got about on the top of the hill where there were trees and great stones. We had a hard time of it there together. Because they now had no idea of yielding, Col. Rall gave the word of command, thus: 'All, that are my grenadiers, march forwards!' All the drummers struck up a march, the hautboy-players blew. At once all that were yet alive shouted, 'Hurrah!' Immediately all were mingled together, Americans and Hessians. There was no more firing, but all ran forward pell-mell upon the fortress. Before we came up, the Americans had a trench about the fortress, as soon as we were within which, the order came to halt. Then the Americans had a mind to run out through us, but then came the command: 'Hold! you are all prisoners of war.' The fort was at once demanded by Gen. V. Kniphausen. The Rebels were allowed two hours for capitulating; when they were expired, the fort was surrendered to General V. Kniphausen with all the munitions of war and provisions belonging thereto, within and without the fort; all guns and arms were to be laid down, and when all this was done, Ralls' reg't. and the old Lossberg, being made to form into two lines facing each other, they were required to march out between the two regiments and deposit their guns and other weapons. Then came the English and took them to New York into

custody, and when the first transport was off, the second marched out of the citadel and was as strong as the first, and they also were conducted to New York into confinement. And when all this was got through with, it was night. Thus the Hessians took possession of the fort, and the rest marched again round to Kingsbridge into our old camp we had before stopped so long. Then came the order that the fort should be called, Fort Knipphausen. —

[From Translation of the Original MSS. at Cassel. N. Y. Historical Society Papers.]

No. 60

EXTRACT FROM THE DIARY OF JOSEPH WIEDESHSLAT,
ENSIGN IN THE HESSIAN CONTINGENT

Nov. 10. Our brigade under Col. Rall, Col. Bose who first commanded us being sick, went to Kingsbridge, to reinforce Lieut.-Gen. von Knyphausen's division. Here there was a hard nut to crack. The enemy had built a fort, on a high, rocky mountain fortified by nature, which they named Fort Washington. Art was also employed to make it very strong. Without possession of this fort, no communication could be maintained with New York, nor could there be any further advance or any thought of quiet winter-quarters.

11. Early in the morning at 5 o'clock, the whole division of His Excellency Gen. von Knyphausen moved out to attack this place. It began to rain hard however, and consequently nothing was done this time.

14. Gen. Howe arrived with the whole army and encamped about a mile behind us. Now another plan was made and the

16th appointed for the attack. This pay has done honor to us Hessians, which every brave man can rightfully attribute to himself. At half-past five o'clock in the morning we went over Kingsbridge to York Island, namely the following regiments: Knyphausen, Huÿn, Bienau, Rall, Lossberg and Waldeck, were joined by Wutginau and the grenadier battalion and formed two columns; the column on the right consisted of Lossberg, Rall, the grenadier battalion, Köhler and Waldeck, was led by Col. Rall and was stationed in a wood until the appointed time. The column of the left consisted of the regiments — Wutginau, Knyphausen, Huÿne, and Bienau and was led by Maj.-Gen. Schmid. His Excellency Lieut.-Gen. von Knyphausen commanded the whole attack, and he was at all times to be found where the resistance and the attack were hottest, and he himself laid hold of the fences to take some of them down and to spur on the men. He was exposed to the terrible cannonade and musketry, as well as to the rifle shots, like a common soldier, and indeed so much so, that it is to be wondered at, that he came off without being killed or wounded. The avant-guard of the column of the right consisted of a troop of jagers and 100 men *prima plana*, commanded by Major von Dechow; the avant-guard of the column of the left consisted of 100 men, commanded by Capt. Medern von Wutginau, in which were I and Lieut. von Löwenfeld. Both the Captain and the Lieutenant are dead; the former died the next day, but the latter remained on the field. I am still living, God be praised, and came off quite well, with the exception of a slight scratch in the face, made by a small branch shot off from a tree, though I led the front line of this avant-guard, consisting of 30 men and was consequently the foremost.

I was here reminded of the old proverb, weeds never die. At 7 o'clock a violent cannonade was opened, to engage the attention of the enemy, so that they should not know where the real attack was to be made. If we had continued the attack already commenced at the time, there would not have been a third part of those lost, that were afterwards actually lost, for with my avant-guard I had already advanced quite high up the mountain, when Gen. von Knyphausen sent me orders to come back. In the mean time Gen. Howe had informed him, that all was not yet in readiness for the feigned attack, and consequently he would have to delay the real attack. At 7½ o'clock the English General Lord Percy, with 2 English and a Hessian brigade, under Maj.-Gen. Stein, — namely the Hereditary Prince, Donop and Mirbach, attacked the lines lying between the fort and New York and carried them without great loss, having only 2 wounded and the rebels deserted their lines. At 11 o'clock the boats came down the Harlems Creek, with 2 brigades of English, to make a descent on the wood lying on our left, and to form a false attack. The real attack was now begun by us, and we found the flower of their troops and their riflemen all on a rock lying before us, almost inaccessible, surrounded by a morass and by three abatis one above another; notwithstanding which all the obstacles were cleared out of the way, the abatis broken into, the morass waded through, the rocks scaled, and the riflemen, who were seconded by a heavy fire of musketry from their intrenchments, driven off, and we reached this so fearful height and mountain, pursued the enemy retiring behind their lines and batteries, drove them out there also, took the batteries, one of which lay way up on the rock and followed the fugitive enemy as far as the real fort, where

we took position at the side of the fort on the declivity of the mountain, in order to be secure from the fire of the fort. There were only ours and Rall's regiment. The fort was summoned, and in half an hour 2600 men marched out and laid down their arms at our feet and surrendered themselves to his Excellency Lieut.-Gen. von Knyphausen (who was present and signed the capitulation) as prisoners of war, and the whole fort was surrendered with all the munition, provision &c. which was considerable. The grenadier battalion Köhler occupied the fort in the evening, and we returned to our camp, where the living again had cause to thank God for their preservation. The loss of the Hessians amounted to more than 300 men killed and wounded. Among the dead were the officers, Capt. Walther of Rall's regiment and Lieut. von Loewenfeld of the Wutgenau regiment; of the deadly wounded were Capt. Barkhausen of the Knyphausen and Col. von Bork from the same regiment, Capt. Meden of the Wutgenau, Lieut. Briede of the Knyphausen, Lieut. Eude of the Wutgenau; Col. von Bork and Lieut. Briede died the same day, and all the others on the second or third day. Maj. von Dechow of the Knyphausen and Lieut. Kühn of the Rall were slightly wounded.

[From Translation of the Original MSS. N. Y. Historical Society Papers.]

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